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JAMES MILL'S *HISTORY OF BRITISH INDIA* IN ITS INTELLECTUAL CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

This thesis argues that James Mill's *History of British India* is, on the one hand, intellectually linked to the Scottish Enlightenment, while, on the other hand, moves beyond that intellectual tradition in the post-French Revolution age. This thesis makes three central claims. First, it argues that in reacting to Montesquieu's idea of oriental society, the contributors to the Scottish Enlightenment used ideas of moral philosophy, philosophical history and political economy in order to create an image of a wealthy Asia whose societies possessed barbarous social manners. Some new writings about Asian societies that were published in the 1790s adopted Montesquieu's views of oriental societies, and started to consider the history of manners and of political institutions as the true criteria of the state of civilisation. These works criticised some Asian social manners, such as female slavery, and questioned previous assumptions about the high civilisation of Indian and Chinese societies. This thesis argues that Mill's *History*, following William Robertson's *History of America*, was based on a study of the historical mind to interpret the texts published in the 1790s and the early nineteenth century. Second, this thesis argues that Mill adopted Francis Jeffrey's idea of semi-barbarism in his study of India. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, William Alexander and Francis Jeffrey started to think of history in the context of a tri-stadial theory, which was more idealist and less materialist than the earlier four-stages theory. Mill tried to develop a holistic view of Asian society. In so doing, he came to criticise the British government's mistaken mercantilist view of government, which he regarded as unsuitable for the conditions of Indian society. Following Adam Smith's moral philosophy, and inspired by the socio-economic progress of North America, Mill suggested that the primary goals for the British government in India should be to improve its agriculture and to secure social freedom. This thesis also concludes that the discussions about Chinese society played an important part in shaping Mill's view of the concept of semi-barbarism. The theory of semi-barbarism helped Mill to reject the cultural ideology of Hindu superiority over Muslim societies. Lastly, this thesis argues that Mill's *History* was influenced by and sought to accommodate Benthamite Utilitarianism. Mill believed the supposed semi-barbarous and problematic native of Indian society could be reformed without following the steps taken by European history or institutions. He prescribed a powerful state for India in order to remove the mercantilist view of government, and to execute administrative and judicial reforms. This thesis concludes that, while Scottish philosophical history helped Mill to create a critique of the British government's attempts to govern India as a commercial society, Benthamite Utilitarianism taught Mill to see history from a teleological viewpoint.

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INTRODUCTION

JAMES MILL ON TRIAL

On a late summer's day in 1831, James Mill (1773-1836), author of *The History of British India* (1818) and Head Examiner of East India House, was called into a Parliamentary chamber to give evidence to the Select Committee which was to decide on what terms to renew the Charter of the East India Company. The chairman was Sir James MacDonald. The following conversation took place:

MacDonald: Have you ever been in India?

Mill: I have not.

MacDonald: And you can only speak from what you have read and heard?

Mill: Yes.

MacDonald: Are you aware that petitions have been sent home by the natives of India most numerous and respectably signed, complaining in the strongest terms of their exclusion from the civil, judicial and financial departments of government?

Mill: I am perfectly aware of such petitions having been sent home, but I am far from supposing that those petitions speak the general language of the country.

MacDonald: What reasons have you to think so?

Mill: I can only speak generally, because my reason is an inference from all I know, from all I have heard, and all I have read about the people.

MacDonald: Do you conceive that it is possible for any person to form an adequate judgement of the character of a people without being personally acquainted with them?

Mill: If the question refers to myself, I am far from pretending to a perfect knowledge of the character of the people of India.¹

On this evidence, Mill was not as confident of his knowledge of India as is suggested by the Preface of his *History*. Horace H. Wilson, the first Professor of Sanskrit at Oxford, commented that in that Preface, Mill 'has taken pains to guard against' anyone to expect that anything had been left unexplored.² Mill's *History* has long been a great unread

¹ The date was 25 August 1831. *Parliamentary Papers* (1831), v, 396-7.

² Horace H. Wilson, Preface of the Editor to Mill's *History of British India* (5th edition, 10 vols., London, 1858), vii.

book, and many modern critics find two great defects in his writing on India. Like Wilson, modern critics usually regard Mill's assertion that he could be a good historian of India without having been to the country as either arrogant or naïve. They also see Mill's low opinion of Indian civilisation as a production of cultural chauvinism, Eurocentrism, and intolerant imperialism.

These two flaws attributed to Mill's *History* by the critics fall into two methodological categories. The first concerns historical evidence. To ask how one can compose a 'true' or judicious history of a country without ever going there is to ask how one is able to select the 'right' historical evidence without personal experience. Mill stated that in order to judge the validity of reports and documents about India, an historian should be able to judge 'the matter of statement, the things given by the historian, as things really done, really said, and really thought' as well as 'the matter of evidence, the matter by which the reality of the saying, the doing, or thinking is ascertained.' In other words, in Mill's argument, the best historian of India was not the one with abundant experience of the country, but the one that had done the best job in judging evidence and documents.³ Against Mill's statement, Wilson contended that personal knowledge of a country, '*and especially of India*, possesses one great recommendation, of which Mr. Mill does not seem to have been aware.' 'It enables the historian,' Wilson argued, 'to judge of the real value of that evidence to which he must have recourse for matters that are beyond the sphere of his own observation.'⁴ Optical and auditory knowledge of India would certainly help an historian to make judgements when composing the history. It is therefore judicious for Wilson to imply that Mill could

³ *Ibid.*, xviii.

⁴ *Ibid.*, ix. The italics are mine. Wilson did not explain why India was a special case.

have given a truer account of the Indians had he ever travelled to the sub-continent.⁵

Many modern critics follow Wilson's example in rejecting Mill's apology for his absence from India, but in more ambitious and ambiguous critical language. For instance, Suleri contends that 'Mill's *History* ... is a dangerous precursor for twentieth century narrative.' She compares Mill's *History* with Salman Rushdie's novel, *Shame*. For Suleri, both *History* and *Shame* represent the 'awareness of the textuality of the third-world history'. She ridicules Mill for maintaining that he was only doing the job of a judge, 'in regard to the witnesses who give their evidence before him.' 'Mill's lack of irony,' Suleri argues, 'allows him to occupy the position of narrator as judge without much ado'. Is there a distinction between the 'textualities' of the first-world and third-world histories as far as narrators are concerned? Is not the comparison between a judge and historian exclusively an intellectual issue, or must it be a reflection of personality as Suleri implies?⁶ John Stuart Mill commented on Mill's Preface to the *History* in his own *Autobiography*: 'The Preface, among the most characteristic of my father's writings, as well as the richest in material of thought, gives a picture which may be entirely depended on, of the sentiments and expectations with which he wrote the History.'⁷ James Mill's reflections on the methodological problem of history were, however, much subtler than many modern critics would admit. Mill believed that an individual's capacity for observation was limited; therefore, 'a competent knowledge of any extensive subject can

⁵ Mill did not deny that a visit to India would help the historian at work. *Ibid.*.

⁶ Sara Suleri, *The Rhetoric of English India* (Chicago, 1992), p. 176. Ginzburg means to re-introduce the time-honoured analogue of judge and historian in his study of a communist gangster's criminal case in modern Italy. Carlo Ginzburg, *The Judge and the Historian*, tr. Anthony Shugaar (London, 1999). The complaint against Mill's approach to historical studies also comes from the historians' camp. For example, David Spadafora, *The Idea of Progress in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (New Haven, 1990), p. 397.

⁷ J. S. Mill, *Autobiography* (London, 1924), p. 21.

ever be acquired' only by combining and cross-examining individual observations.⁸ In other words, the more reports a person had read the better qualified an historian he would be. Mill's argument here has two major defects. First, it does not tell readers how it could be possible for an historian to consult all the documents and other relevant evidence. Second, if the task of consulting all reports was impossible then how did an historian decide that some reports were more valuable than the others? How could an historian find the truth when many reports contradicted one another? Was it not true that personal experience in India could help an historian to determine the verification and value of reports? In other words, Mill's syllogism omitted two important variables of the historian's knowledge of a given subject matter: time, and the ultimate criterion of verification of knowledge.⁹ Mill's argument, however, had two merits. First, he pointed out that things to be observed were infinite, while individuals' time and capacities are finite. It was hence both practically and theoretically impossible to assume that personal knowledge or experience played a decisive role in the study of a great subject like history. Second, and more significantly, Mill, one hundred and fifty years before Croce, asked the Crocean question of whether it was possible for historians to understand Roman history better than Cicero's maid. Evidently, Mill's answer to this question would be emphatically positive, for he believed that personal experience in history was of secondary importance. Certainly, Mill's knowledge of India relied considerably on travels or pseudo-anthropological observations. Those personal observations, which Mill

⁸ Mill, *History*, i, pp. xxii.

⁹ Nevertheless, Mill was not entirely ignorant about these two variables. As this thesis will discuss in ch. 5, Mill postponed the date of publication of the *History of British India*, because he had to catch up with the most recently published reports. In addition, he set up the laws of human nature as the ultimate criterion for judging the validation of reports. Mill's rationalism was in opposition to the argument that personal experience could help historians to verify reports that they read.

later utilised, were exactly what Suleri describes as the 'textuality' of the third-world.

For Mill's critics, the second methodological flaw of his *History* concerned historical interpretations, which were not based on evidence. From many critics' viewpoints, Mill was a villain because he shamelessly categorised the level of development of Indian society far lower than was acceptable.¹⁰ This accusation has become even more serious since Edward Said published his influential and polemical work, *Orientalism*. Said argues that British Orientalists were co-workers in the British Empire in the East. Orientalists' knowledge helped to enhance colonial officialdom, and consequently to maintain the superior power of the British Empire. Colonial knowledge and colonial power not only co-existed, but also formed an alliance: hegemonic knowledge producing hegemonic power and *vice versa*. Said concludes that the Orient exists only in the Westerners' representations of the ontological *episteme* or imagination; Western knowledge of the Orient was meant to maintain the supposed essence of the Orient, to keep it eternally as the east, with the West always as the west.¹¹ Focusing on

¹⁰ Indeed, nowadays few critics accept the notion of a ranking scale of civilization. The individuality of each tribe, society or nation is well received by anthropologists. Cultures rather than 'the' civilisation of humans are the agenda for humanities studies. For anthropologists or a 'thick description' school of thought, it is a vain attempt to define what is 'civilised' or 'barbarous'. Collingwood was probably the last idealist who tended to re-define 'Civilisation' from a pre-existing notion shaped by the nineteenth century's Utilitarianism. R. G. Collingwood, *The New Leviathan*, particularly Part III 'Civilisation' and Part IV 'Barbarism' (London, 1942), and 'The Utilitarian Civilisation', *Essays in Political Philosophy* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 197-200.

¹¹ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London, 1978). For a succinct and convenient interpretation of the work for historians, see John MacKenzie, *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts* (Manchester, 1995), ch.1, 'the 'Orientalism' debate', pp. 1-19, and D. A. Washbrook, 'Orient and Occident: Colonial Discourse Theory and the Historiography of British Empire', *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Historiography*, ed. Robin Winks (Oxford, 1999), pp. 596-611. Probably the most updated accounts of critiques of Saidian Orientalism are found in Ziauddin Sardar's *Orientalism* (London, 1999), particularly ch. 3; and Bill Ashcroft and D. P. Ahluwalia's, *Edward Said: The Paradox of Identity* (London, 1999), particularly ch. 2. Sardar points out that Said's Orientalism is a radical synthesis of many precursors' works. Sardar appreciates MacKenzie's contention that Orientalism was a changing and historical phenomenon, rather than an ontological and essential existence as Said asserts. (Sardar's *Orientalism*, pp. 71ff.) Based on a close reading, Ashcroft and Ahluwalia's recent study attempts to intertextualise Said's works. It is a much more sympathetic account of Said's Orientalism than Sardar's.

the late nineteenth century British and French discourses of the Orient, Said's *Orientalism* briefly touches on William Jones (1746-1794), the greatest British Orientalist of the eighteenth century, and Jones's outspoken adversary, James Mill. Said's treatment of these two figures is controversial. Said argues that the real British dominance in India began with Jones's 'scientific' treatment or knowledge of Oriental texts and materials, not from Clive's war of Plassey, as political or military historians usually assume. Said maintains that, immediately after his arrival in India, Jones 'began the course of personal study that was to gather in, to rope off, to domesticate the Orient and thereby to turn it into a province of European learning'. 'From the days of Sir William Jones the Orient had been both what Britain ruled and what Britain knew about it: the coincidence between geography, knowledge, and power, with Britain always in the master's place, was complete.'¹² Said's conclusion invites criticism from Jones scholars. Garland Cannon contends that Jones 'always resisted any political aspects of scholarship.'¹³ David Kopf, more radically, calls for a union of Jones scholars to refute Saidian Orientalism; he declares, 'Those of us who honor Sir William Jones two hundred years after his death must find a way to counter such views of Orientalism and to explain its rightful place in historical perspective.'¹⁴

¹² Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 77-8, 215

¹³ Cannon argues, '[i]n Jones's view, if the governing of other people falls to the lot of the scholar, their well-being should be the administrator's first concern. The people should be governed by their own laws and customs, without a Westernisation of Indian values and attitude.' Garland Cannon, *The Life and Mind of Oriental Jones* (Cambridge, 1990), xv-xvi. Cannon published *Oriental Jones* in 1948. His new study of the same hero is certainly a reaction and counter-discourse against Said's polemics.

¹⁴ David Kopf, 'The Historiography of British Orientalism, 1772- 1992', *Object of Enquiry*, ed. Garland Cannon & Kevin R. Brine (New York, 1995), p. 158. Kopf's main contention against the Saidian view of Orientalists is that Orientalists were genuine helpers for Indian modernization, while James Mill and Macaulay are unsympathetic propagators of dissemination policy. To this ambiguous and problematic distinction between modernisation and westernisation, King offers a short clarification in his account of Said and Kopf's confrontation. Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion* (London, 1999), pp. 82-88.

Generally speaking, there are two major approaches toward the interpretation of the relationship between scholarship and the Empire in the debate. Said's approach is structuralist. In this approach, the intentions of the historical actors are not considered in the framework created by researchers. They are studied because of their actions. The actions are studied because of their influences and functions in certain frameworks and from certain points of view. In this context, Jones appears as an architect, manufacturing the knowledge of Oriental languages and texts to serve the growth of British dominance over India. The structuralists argue that Jones was highly respected by Hastings, who meant to teach British administrators Indian customs and languages in order to govern well. The close relationship between Jones and Hastings, scholar and governor, was therefore more than a coincidence.¹⁵ Although such a structuralist approach has its insights, it is one-dimensional and prone to be a tautology. From the structuralist viewpoint, it is difficult to find anything, in relation to the state, which was not entangled in the power/knowledge structure.¹⁶ Most importantly, the structuralist approach fails to explain the self-conscious intentions or purposes of the historical actors. For example, Jones worked on Indian flora and antiquity for the Asiatick Society, established by him and many other gentlemen colonialists in Calcutta in 1784. It is very unlikely that he believed that botanical studies could contribute to British dominance in India. Moreover, Jones announced that 'The *Sanscrit* language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the *Greek*, more copious than the *Latin*, and more exquisitely refined than either'.¹⁷ It is hard to see how such a conclusion would convince

¹⁵ Bernard Cohn, *Colonization and the Form of Knowledge* (Princeton, 1996), chs. 2 and 3.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

¹⁷ *Asiatick Researches*, 1, p. 422.

his colleagues that the aesthetic knowledge of Asian languages could enhance British imperial supremacy. Besides, Jones's study of herbal medicine should be understood in the context of a gentleman's scientific curiosity regarding the eighteenth century or a humanist's care for life, instead of in that of national or personal practical interests.¹⁸ Political considerations did play an important role in some of Jones's Oriental studies, however. For instance, Jones harboured a clear intention in his codification of Indian laws. As Teltscher correctly argues, Jones studied Sanskrit and Hindu laws keenly and diligently because he felt it was necessary for the sake of the British empire; he believed that the British could govern the Indians more effectively if they could be independent from Hindu pundits or Muslim maulavis, interpreters of laws and classics.¹⁹ To sum up, one needs carefully to distinguish the different branches and different phases of the pursuit of Oriental knowledge, in order to understand Jones' or other Orientalists' intentions. From this point of view, a structuralistic or holistic approach, though potentially insightful, is too cursory for an historian, as it fails to specify the significance

¹⁸ Jones published *The Religious Use of Botanical Philosophy* in 1784. Jones was one of Banks' correspondents in India on scientific matters. For Banks' career and the gentleman occupations in the science of the century, see John Gascoigne, *Joseph Banks and the English Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 47ff.

¹⁹ Jones wrote to Charles Chapman: 'I can no longer bear to be at the mercy of our pundits, who deal our Hindu law as they please, and it at reasonable rates, when cannot find it ready made.' *Letters of Sir William Jones*, ed. G. Cannon (Oxford, 1970), ii, 683-84. S. N. Mukherjee, *Sir William Jones* (Cambridge, 1968), pp. 128-9. Kate Teltscher, *India Inscribed* (Oxford, 1995), p. 196. Therefore, Cannon's assumption that Jones 'always resisted any political aspects of scholarship' is premature. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that Jones might have had a different definition of politics from that of modern critics'. When Jones knew that he was implicated in Burke's impeachment against Hastings, he indignantly expressed that '[w]hat I have to do with politicks? It is my sole duty to convey law or what I believe to be law'. Mukherjee, *ibid.*, pp. 123-4. To Jones, politics means to distinguish friends from enemies and to involve or attach to a political party. In Jones' mind, the interests of British empire are identical with those of India, at the level of the elite society. Supposedly working harmoniously with the Indian elite, Jones did not think what he did for the British Empire was in a conflict of interest with the Indians. Thus, what he did in legal codification and government had nothing to do with politics. However, such an explanation is airy guessing work. A new study of Jones's views of empire, patriotism and politics is sorely needed.

of time and place.²⁰

Said and his followers are certainly unfair to the Orientalists; their representation of the latter is both polemic and hegemonic. Their antagonists sometimes make the same mistakes, however. Many critics dislike Said's treatment of Jones in *Orientalism*; they are even more appalled by Said's supposed preference for James Mill over Jones: *Orientalism* criticises Jones but not Mill.²¹ To counteract Saidian Orientalism, some historians adopt a convenient means to prove Jones's innocence and to rescue his fame: they condemn the villains of imperialism, such as James Mill, and European intellectuals who did not appreciate Oriental languages, such as Dugald Stewart (1756-1828). Trautmann, for instance, draws a contrast between William Jones, Charles Wilkins, H. T. Colebrooke and many other Orientalists with Stewart and Mill in terms of Indophilia versus Indophobia.²² In the same tradition of refuting Saidian Orientalism, Kopf goes so far as to assert that Mill was 'the fanatic Utilitarian thinker with a passionate prejudice -

²⁰ Said tries to synthesize the discourses and activities of hundreds of Orientalists and writers in a single volume of *Orientalism*. Some would predict that cursory and injudicious conclusions are unavoidable.

²¹ MacKenzie points out that this is because 'Said's Orientalists are generally those who created their supposedly mythic Orient out of personal experiences'. MacKenzie, *Orientalism*, p. 26. Nevertheless, there is another important reason for this. One of Said's critiques of Orientalism is that Orientalism tended to discover and maintain the essence, or nature, of the Orient and Oriental societies in order to justify the Western superiority and dominance over the Orient. That is to say, Orientalists were guilty of claiming the unchangeability of the Orient. Thus, James Mill, along with those who conspicuously campaigned to improve India, escapes Said's criticism. Said's knowledge of James Mill is derived from Eric Stoke's work, *The English Utilitarians and India* (Oxford, 1957). In fact, all the major figures in Stoke's study, including James Young, James Mackintosh, Edmund Burke, John Malcolm, Thomas Munro, Mountstuart Elphinstone and many others, are altogether free from Said's censures. This is because all of them were engaged in reforming India. Said, *Orientalism*, p. 214.

²² Thomas R. Trautmann, *Aryans and British India* (Berkeley, 1997), chs. 3 and 4. For a shorter account of the same conclusion, see T. R. Trautmann, 'The Lives of Sir William Jones', *Sir William Jones 1746-1794*, ed. Alexander Murray (Oxford, 1998), pp. 92-121, particularly, pp. 116-21. Although such a contrast is not a good history and is as polemical as Saidian Orientalism, Trautmann provides a plausible theory of 'the new Orientalism' on which his contrast is made. On Trautmann's definition, '[t]he new Orientalism was self-conscious about its own formation, and constructed a sharp distinction between itself and the earlier writers on India, both the ancient Greek and the European travelers and missionaries of the recent past. ... the new Orientalism is based on knowledge of Indian languages, and reaches the minds and intentions of the Indians.' Trautmann, *ibid.*, p.98.

Hitlerean in places - against Hindus.’²³ Kopf’s epithet, unfortunately, is a counterfeit, rather than a counterattack to Saidian critiques.

Some attacks on Mill come from Said’s affiliates, who use deconstructionism and postmodernist weapons that Said himself did not use. Many sympathisers with Saidian Orientalism try to supplement his theory of Western hegemonic texts representing the Orient. By doing so, they bring Mill into the debate and describe his *History* as a hegemonic text. Ronald Inden is probably the most outspoken theorist of this approach. Following theorists of deconstructionism, Inden maintains that Mill, as well as many other Indologists, tended to believe in and try to represent the ‘essence’ or ‘nature’ of the ‘Hindu Mind-set’.²⁴ Other critics of the approach are more moderate on this point. For instance, both Saree Makdisi and Balachandra Rajan admit that although Mill was an important figure in the development of British Imperialism, his text is not hegemonic as Inden argues. This argument implies that Mill, as a scholar, was not in a full co-operation with the British government, in order to make policies for ruling India. In a post-Enlightenment mood, Makdisi points out that Mill helped to produce the unwelcome reform project of improving India. ‘Now no longer the immutably different space governed by Hastings, “defended” by Burke, and fervently studied by Jones, the Orient became a space defined by its “backwardness,” its retardation no longer a region or a field offering materials for extraction, exploitation, and exchange, it became a field

²³ David Kopf, ‘European Enlightenment, Hindu Renaissance and the Enrichment of the Hindu Spirit: A History of Historical Writings on British Orientalism’, *Orientalism, Evangelicalism and the Military Cantonment in Early Nineteenth-Century India*, ed. Nancy G. Cassel (Lampeter, 1991), p. 26. Readers can easily detect that Kopf’s resentful epithet differs greatly from his scholarly handsome discussion of Mill in his great work *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance: the Dynamics of Indian Modernization, 1773-1835* (Berkeley, 1969).

²⁴ Ronald Inden, *Imagining India* (Oxford, 1990), ch. 3, Mackenzie, *Orientalism*, p. 27. Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion*, pp. 92-4.

to be rewritten and transformed; it became “underdeveloped,” a region whose “development” suddenly became the European’s burden. ... cultural difference could no longer be accepted, let alone appreciated or valued; it became something that Europe had a “duty” to “improve” - and hence to seek out, penetrate, uproot, eradicate and destroy.’²⁵ Rajan’s treatment of Mill is more in a European, than in a British, setting, and he states that ‘Mill and Hegel standardise and harden imperial discourse, putting the other into the lumber room of history as well as at the outskirts of civilisation.’²⁶

Since the cat of Saidian Orientalism was set among the pigeons of British colonial historiography, James Mill has, unfortunately, been studied only in an oversimplified manner. Some critics question Mill’s interest in writing his *History*. Kopf remarks that, like Macaulay, ‘Mill seems to have used the Company to secure financial independence to pursue non-Indian intellectual ends.’²⁷ Pushing the motive theory to its extreme, C. Mittal can only see British historians or officials undertaking occupations connected to Indian affairs either for power or for wealth.²⁸ It is naive, perhaps, to suggest that Mill never thought of fame or craved for success and material rewards when composing the

²⁵ Saree Makdisi, *Romantic Imperialism: Universal Empire and Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 113-4.

²⁶ Balachandra Rajan, *Under Western Eyes: India from Milton to Macaulay* (Durham, 1999), pp. 8-9.

²⁷ David Kopf, ‘The Historiography of British Orientalism, 1772- 1992’, p. 145. Would Kopf suggest that John Stuart Mill, entering into India House at his seventeenth year of age but promoting the knowledge of Political Economy, British democracy and women suffrage through out his life, was guilty for the same cause?

²⁸ Remarking on Macaulay’s career in India, Mittal professes that ‘[t]he most pertinent question may be that after having hatred for Indian society, why was he interested in coming to India. What were his motives? Two main reasons - private and public ... Personally, he had some grievances against his own political party ... However, he was in much need of money .’ C. Mittal, *India Distorted* (New Delhi, 1995), p. 40. Likewise, of Elphinstone’s *History of India*, Mittal says that ‘one does not find any original difference as regards the motives from that of Mill’s work.’ Talking about Malcolm, the author maintains, ‘[b]esides the power and grandeur for which this service attracted him, monetary considerations might have weighed on Malcolm’s mind.’ The ‘service’ referred to is Malcolm’s acceptance of a diplomatic post as the Assistant Resident at Hyderabad State. See Mittal, *ibid.*, pp. 68, 73.

History. But to emphasise these motives is to trivialise Mill and his *History*, and, as a consequence, their places in contemporary culture.²⁹ Mill, the *History*, and his age are in fact closely linked to one another, and hence need to be more carefully studied, especially in the context of post-Saidian scholarship.

This thesis will examine Mill's *History* with respect to three successive phenomena - the Scottish Enlightenment, the *Edinburgh Review* and, finally, Benthamite Utilitarianism. It will analyse Mill's ideas on civilisation and his *History* in the context of the intellectual legacy of the Scottish Enlightenment, in which Mill was brought up, in that of the radical or late Enlightenment age, wherein, sometimes in conflict with the prevailing ideology, he tried to rationalise imperialist government. Historians generally set Mill's life and thought in two contexts: Benthamite Utilitarianism and the Scottish Enlightenment. With respect to Benthamite Utilitarianism, students emphasise Mill's role in propagating radical reform and democracy. Stokes' *English Utilitarians and India* is a study of this kind *par excellence*; he contrasts Mill with the Burkean school of British rulers in India, including Thomas Munro (1761-1827), John Malcolm (1769-1833), Charles Metcalfe (1785-1846) and Mountstuart Elphinstone (1779-1859). Stokes argues that, in contrast to the Romantic school, which favoured a paternal politics and

²⁹ Readers cannot help think that Mittal is indulging in what Bhalla calls 'revenge histories'. In a Gandhian spirit of humanism, Bhalla argues that 'Colonial history, however, was enacted in a familiar world and with our help. In trying to rewrite it now we should look at it not through the evil's eye-glass whose trick is to interchange black and white, greed and virtue, defeat and victory, but with our ordinary eyes and honestly. We shall, thus, have to resist the temptation to write revenge histories in which old justifications for the acquisitiveness of the colonialists would be merely replaced by new assertions about the ignored virtue of the defeated; old spectacles about the East written from behind the security of the gun would be transformed into new melodramas in which the villainous West will be hissed off the stage so that the Orient can proclaim its victory and hence its humanity. Unfortunately, such histories are being written.' Alok Bhalla, 'A Plea Against Revenge Histories: Some Reflections on Orientalism and the Age of Empire', *Indian Responses to Colonialism in the 19th Century*, ed. Alok Bhalla and Sudhir Chandra (New Delhi, 1993), pp. 1-13; p. 5.

unitary form of administration for India, Mill promoted separation of governmental powers; Mill, in short, created a Benthamite political legacy based on political liberalism and *laissez-faire* economy in dealing with Indian affairs.³⁰ Majeed also interprets Mill's *History* in the context of Utilitarian politics. In his *Ungoverned Imaginings*, Majeed, on behalf of James Mill, describes the *History* as a mirror in which English society is reflected as problematic for the Utilitarians.³¹ While this study agrees with the importance of Benthamite Utilitarianism in Mill's thought on Indian society, it will, nevertheless, argue that the Scottish Enlightenment plays an equally decisive role in shaping Mill's *History*. It is true that when Mill worked in East India House, he was full of Benthamite reform projects. But when his *History* was composed, his view of civilisation and history was far beyond Benthamite Utilitarianism. If a student, like Stokes, understands Mill's view of India merely from the viewpoint of Utilitarianism, he would find Mill a theorist and activist *ex nihilo* in British politics, neglecting the significance of Mill's education and his thirty years in Scotland. Stokes fails to integrate the Scottish Enlightenment element of Mill's thoughts into his argument, although the

³⁰ Eric Stokes, *English Utilitarians and India* (Oxford, 1957), p. 143. The most comprehensive modern study of Burke's attitude towards India in relation to his general political thought is found in Frederick Whelan's *Edmund Burke and India: Political Morality and Empire* (Pittsburgh, 1996).

³¹ Javed Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings* (Oxford, 1992), see particularly 'Introduction', chs. 4 and 5. Majeed describes the distinctive feature of *History* as self-reflexive (p. 128). In the age of Napoleonic wars and the revival of kingly power and popular loyalty, Mill could not conspicuously attack English politics. In this context, India became a surrogate for Mill's critique of aristocratic society. Although I believe that both neglect the importance of the Scottish enlightenment influence on Mill's thought, both Stokes' and Majeed's works are superb studies in their own rights. Readers will find that I am indebted to them. The other good studies of Mill in the context of Utilitarianism can be found in William Thomas, *The Philosophic Radicals* (Oxford, 1979), and Robert Fenn, *James Mill's Political Thought* (New York, 1987). Thomas acknowledged the importance of the *History* for understanding Mill's political thought. Thomas, *ibid.*, p.98. Indeed, Robert Fenn's work, originally composed in 1972, does not discuss *History* as much as it should. It is also worthy of note that Thomas recognizes the importance of the Scottish Enlightenment in shaping Mill's view of history. William Thomas, 'Introduction' to *The History of British India* (Chicago, 1975), pp. ix-xlvii; particularly, xvii.

importance of this element had already been emphasised by Gladys Bryson and Duncan Forbes in the 1950s.³²

While Mill's *History* is customarily set in the context of the radical Utilitarian movement, some historians of civic humanism recognise the importance of the Scottish Enlightenment in shaping Mill's views of politics and society. John Burrow and Donald Winch ask how the ideologies of civic humanism of the eighteenth century were replaced by or transformed into the Utilitarian discourses of the nineteenth. To be more specific, Burrow and Winch try to determine how philosophical Whigs in the North interacted with philosophical radicals from the South, and how the political concerns of the eighteenth century were gradually taken over by the concerns with problems of society in the nineteenth century. In this intellectual movement, according to Burrow and

³² Gladys Bryson, *Man and Society: The Scottish Inquiry of the Eighteenth Century* (Princeton, 1945). Duncan Forbes, 'James Mill and India', *Cambridge Journal*, 5 (1951/2), pp. 19-33. and 'Scientific Whiggism: Adam Smith and John Millar', *Cambridge Journal*, 7 (1954), pp. 643-70. Bryson mentioned, though implicitly, James Mill's connection with Scottish thought. See Bryson, *ibid.*, pp. 102, 145. It is interesting to find that because Bryson mentioned either James or John Stuart Mill as Mill or Mills without giving a specific reference, the editor of Bryson's work mistakes, at least once, John Mill for James Mill. James Mill was indeed a very obscure figure at that time. See the Index to Bryson's *Man and Society*, p. 284. Forbes's discussion of James Mill in the Scottish Enlightenment is much more straightforward and explicit. It is easy to detect Mill's debts to Scottish thinkers from Bain's biography of Mill, in which Bain extracts, incompletely, the library records at Edinburgh showing how eagerly Mill devoured the works of the Scottish Enlightenment. Alexander Bain, *James Mill: A Biography* (London, 1881), pp. 18-9. Bain's work is still the sole and best biography of Mill. Because Stokes's achievement is so great, many Mill students following Stokes, omit this important origin of Mill's thoughts. For instance, Mittal identifies Macaulay and James Mill as unqualified offspring of Evangelicalism and Utilitarianism. Mittal, *India Distorted*, pp. 29, 41. Trautmann also sees Mill as a thorough Utilitarian and akin to Evangelicalism. Trautmann, *Aryans and India*. Ironically, it was John Stuart Mill who presented James Mill virtually exclusively as a Benthamite follower, though a great one. Although John Mill did give an account, in his *Autobiography*, of how his father introduced him to Scottish thought of the eighteenth century through Smith, Robertson, Hume and Millar's works, he did not explain to what extent those works were a coherent source for his father's thinking. Later in his famed article on Bentham, John Mill reinforced the conventional impression that Mill was a creative mouthpiece for the Benthamite sect. J. S. Mill, *On Bentham and Coleridge* (London, 1959), pp. 44, 69. John Mill's admirer Halévy simply recapitulated the interpretation in his great study, *The Growth of Philosophic Radicalism*, tr. Mary Morris (London, 1928). Although Alexander Bain had in 1881 documented how much James Mill owed to Scottish thought on moral philosophy, civil society and political economy, Halévy managed not to mention or explore that aspect of influence on Mill's political thought.

Winch, Mill had his distinct role.³³ Their discussions of Mill's *History*, unfortunately, do not move beyond the parameters set by Duncan Forbes; the *History* is still considered as a marginal text in the intellectual movement.³⁴

There are few studies that look at James Mill's *History* in the context of the Scottish Enlightenment. In her pioneering article, 'Scottish Orientalism: from William Robertson to James Mill', Jane Rendall recognises a tradition of Scottish Orientalism. She points out that in the early nineteenth century, many Scots who went out to India and became Oriental linguists were educated at the University of Edinburgh, and were generally closely connected with Dugald Stewart.³⁵ Since Rendall's work was published, more studies of the Scottish contribution to Orientalism have been attempted. Martha McLaren, for instance, argues that three Scottish officials in India, Thomas Munro, John Malcolm and Mountstuart Elphinstone, all held essentially Scottish views of human nature. Rejecting Stokes' argument that the three officials were influenced by Burke's Romanticism, McLaren argues that these three Scots in India were influenced by the Scottish Enlightenment instead.³⁶ She asserts that all these three Scots read Smith, Hume

³³ Pocock attempts to create the dialogue between the Scottish and English thinkers in the framework of trans-Atlantic political tradition. John Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment* (Princeton, 1974). But Pocock does not extend the tradition into late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. John Burrow carries on this theme of the long tradition of civic humanism interacting with commercial society to discuss the continuity and changes in British political thought in *Whigs and Liberals* (Oxford, 1988), in which James Mill, along with many others, is understood in this tradition. Also, in one sense, Burrow's work is a synthesis of Pocock's works and Winch's series of articles about the origin of British modern political science. See their articles in Stefan Collini *et al.*, *That Noble Science of Politics* (Cambridge, 1982).

³⁴ Following Forbes, Burrow and Winch do discuss Mill's *History* in the tradition of the Scottish Enlightenment. John Burrow, *Evolution and Society* (Cambridge, 1966) and Donald Winch (ed.), *James Mill: Selected Economic Writings* (Edinburgh, 1967), p. 388.

³⁵ Jane Rendall, 'Scottish Orientalism, from William Robertson to James Mill', *Historical Journal*, 25:1 (1982), pp. 43-69. But this article ends before Mill's presence becomes important.

³⁶ Martha McLaren, 'Writing and Making History: Thomas Munro, John Malcolm and Mountstuart Elphinstone, Three Scotsmen in the history and Historiography of British India', Ph.D. Thesis, (Simon Fraser University, 1992); particularly pp. 199ff. Martha McLaren, 'From Analysis to Prescription: Scottish Concepts of Asian Despotism in Early Nineteenth-Century British India', *International History Review*,

and Robertson's works, and followed Robertson and Hume's theory that feudal society could only progress into the commercial society via a stage of despotic government. Thus, they proposed a despotic or paternal ruling system in India. McLaren's discussion of Malcolm is convincing, but that of Munro is not. Munro in the end found Smith's work could offer little help to British administrators in governing India. He complained that '[e]very man writes as much as he can, and quotes Montesquieu, and Hume, and Adam Smith, and speaks as if he were living in a country where people were free and governed themselves.' Munro's conscious self-distancing from the Scottish Enlightenment, in other words, is evident.³⁷ Nevertheless, it is a good starting point for scholars to think about the significance of the apparent affinities between some colonial officials' governing ideas and the Scottish Enlightenment - how the men of action derived their administrative resorts from the intellectual fountain.

Searl Davis's and Uma Satyavolu's studies are two of the few works to discuss Mill's *History* in the context of the Scottish Enlightenment. Davis tries to develop further Ronald Meek's discussions of the four stages theory. He locates the theory in a broader tradition of philosophical history, arguing that the four stages theory was a prominent, rather than a marginal, as some critics contend, intellectual product of the Scottish Enlightenment. He finds that many more writers are entitled to be called philosophical historians in the Scottish sense and in this enlarged family of philosophical writers, James Mill was the very last exemplar.³⁸ Apart from this, Davis also sets the

15:3 (1993), pp. 469-501.

³⁷ McLaren does not discuss why Charles Metcalfe, an Englishman, is excluded from her study. Stokes argues that Metcalfe, together with Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone, belonged to the same school of Burkean Romanticism. It is not plausible to separate Metcalfe from the other three officials by saying that he was not a Scot.

³⁸ Davis adds a few more figures into the philosophical tradition: those are James Stewart and his *Principle of Political Oeconomy* (1767), Gilbert Stuart, Robert Henry and his *History of Great Britain*

four stages theory in the context of classical republicanism and commercial society.³⁹ But Davis pays much more, if not exclusive, attention to Mill's idea of history and civilisation in the context of Mill's idea of class and utility, and seems only interested in linking Scottish philosophical history with a theory of class.

The other study of Mill's idea of civilisation is that of Uma Satyavolu. While her work is indebted to Foucault, she does not accept that there is an interruption in the Western scientific tradition around 1800.⁴⁰ In this continuity of the scientific knowledge of civilisation, Satyavolu argues, Mill was a key figure in linking the Scottish Enlightenment with "Victorian" historiography - a militantly progressive view of history.⁴¹ Unfortunately, Satyavolu loosely and incorrectly assumes that the idea of progress in the Scottish Enlightenment is identical with that of James Mill; she ignores those significant nuances, which simultaneously connect and separate the Scottish Enlightenment of the 1750s, the radical Enlightenment of the 1790s and Macaulay's Victorian age, assuming that ideas of progress of these three separate ages form a seamless continuity.⁴²

(1771-1785), James Dunbar and his *Essays on the History of Mankind* (1780), Alexander Fraser Tytler and his *The Element of General History, Ancient and Modern* (1801) and Thomas Blackwell and his *Enquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer* (1735) and *Letters concerning Mythology* (1748). Searl S. Davis, 'Scottish Philosophical History, Hume to James Mill', Ph.D. Thesis, (University of Toronto, 1981).

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 85-6.

⁴⁰ Uma Ramana Satyavolu, Preface to 'The Enlightenment Idea of Civilization and the Production of "Victorian" Historiography', Ph. D. Thesis, (West Virginia University, 1997). She expresses her intellectual debts to 'Foucault, Mary Poovey, Homi Bhabha, Edward Said, and Antonio Gramsci.' See Preface to the Thesis, p. v.

⁴¹ This point has been well detected by Forbes, Winch and many others. See Duncan Forbes, 'James Mill and India', Donald Winch, 'The System of the North', Stefan Collini *et al.* *That Noble Science of Politics* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 23-62. Spadafora, *The Idea of Progress in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, and Searl Davis, 'Scottish Philosophical History, Hume to James Mill', Ph.D. Thesis, (University of Toronto., 1981)

⁴² Satyavolu, 'The Enlightenment Idea of Civilization and the Production of "Victorian" Historiography', p. 4. Likewise, the author remarks loosely that '[c]ivilization had been conceived by the Scottish Enlightenment thinkers as the progression of society from one stage to the next, each successive stage a more rational, hence a more desirable, step toward that ultimate utilitarian utopian envisaged by them in

The present study is meant to explore and explain these nuances overlooked by students of eighteenth-century intellectual movements. To achieve this purpose, it inevitably has to juxtapose various discourses about the nature and progress of civilisation from the high noon of the Scottish Enlightenment to the publication of Mill's *History* in 1818. Many historians have produced useful studies of those discourses. In order to avoid confusion with the discourse theory fashioned by literary critics, those historical studies of British representations of non-European societies can be described as historical studies of such discourses. The discourse theory of literary critics is meant to expose the positions or identities, in terms of gender, class and other interests, of those who represent non-European societies. On the other hand, the historical studies of discourses generally arrange discourses or British representations of non-European societies in the order of time, and compare them in terms of approval, disapproval, ambivalence or other attitudinal attributes. Such historical and typological studies of discourses of civilisation or attitudes towards the non-European world have been flourishing in literary history: George Bearce's *British Attitudes towards India*, Victor G. Kiernan's *The Lords of Human Kind*, Peter Marshall and Glyn Williams's *Great Map of*

the ideal commercial society.' (p. 87) Satyavolu is not aware of the Scottish Enlightenment's neo-classical concerns with cyclical history. She also links the Enlightenment with the Utilitarianism movement in the post- Revolution age. From an historian's viewpoint, Satyavolu's study is short of the virtue of testimonies and documentation. For example, she argues that '[William] Jones' cosmopolitanism threatens the insular sense of superiority of his compatriots, since translation implies a lack in the cultural space of the target language, as well as an equality (implicit in the very assumption of translatability) between the language of original and that of the translation.' By Jones's 'compatriots', Satyavolu means James Mill and many others. (p. 58) But is it not Mill who relied heavily on Jones and other Orientalists' translations? Mill or campaigners of Anglicization in India were by no means 'threatened' by the 'translatability' of Indian languages. On the contrary, they needed the 'translatability' either to grasp or to create the reality of Indian society, hence the very thing they would welcome. Acknowledging precisely this need for 'translatability', James Mill characteristically criticized British merchants in China because they did not produce as many translations of Chinese texts as Indian merchants and officers had done. 'If the gentlemen at Canton are not permitted to explore the country, there are books among the Chinese ... Why have they never been produced? Why has it not been made a point to have Englishmen acquainted with the language of China?' *Edinburgh Review*, (July 1809), pp. 412-3.

Mankind, among others, are well known to historians.⁴³ These studies colourfully present the fluctuations of British attitudes towards non-European societies. They analyse and categorise different types of discourse, but do not locate those discourses in pre-existing ideologies or social matrixes from which the discourses were conceived, received, and modified. In short, these works focus more on textual analyses than on contextual understandings.⁴⁴ In contrast to the studies of discourse analysis, the present thesis attempts to understand Mill's thought and his *History* not only in its intellectual context but also in political circumstances. A serious discourse must be a deliberate action launched in order to present a certain social agenda, which in turn limits and is limited by specific political ideologies. It is good to know what Mill said, but it is more important to know why he said it. Unlike historical discourse studies, the thesis will focus more on the political and historical ideologies that gave rise to Scottish discourses about civilisation and non-European societies. It is meant not only to address the political implications of these discourses, but also their pre-conditions and their

⁴³ I thank Professor Kiernan for suggesting to me that I describe these historians' works as 'discussion studies'. I retain my usage for the reason that, like critics of discourse theory, those historians expose the textual meaning of discourses. But, while the literary critics mean to highlight the intention of discourse-speaker, the historians focus on constructing history in terms of attitudes and opinions. The affinity of textual readings, apart from differences, between the historians and literary critics encourages me to use 'discourses' to describe the historians' works. As a study of intellectual history, this thesis means to provide a contextual interpretation of Mill's work.

⁴⁴ George D. Bearce, *British Attitudes towards India 1784-1858* (London, 1961), V. G. Kiernan, *The Lords of Human Kind* (Harmondsworth, 1972), Peter Marshall and Glyn Williams, *The Great Map of Mankind: Perceptions of New Worlds in the Age of Enlightenment* (Cambridge, Mass., 1982). Inden's *Imagining India* and Partha Mitter's *Much Maligned Monsters: History of European Reaction to Indian Art* (Oxford, 1977) also take a textual approach and are famous in their respective fields in their own right. There are many less well known studies with the same approach, such as Jonathan Spence, *The Chan's Great Continent: China in Western Minds* (London, 1999), Colin Mackerras, *Western Images of China* (Oxford, 1999). The title of Toshio Yokoyama's *Japan in the Victorian Mind: a Study of Stereotyped Images of a Nation, 1850-80* (London, 1987) suggests that it will be a contribution to contextual historiography. Unfortunately, this work, though valuable in its own right, exactly misses providing readers a picture or structure of 'the Victorian Mind'. It is again a textual reading of British discourses about Japan.

processes of formation. It is therefore a study of ideology, rather than a typology of discourses. Discourses are only verbal expressions of the historical mind and horizon; Wolfgang Ifflin remarks that '[w]e can see only what we want to look at.'⁴⁵ One can only see things within the horizon created by one's predecessors. This study tries to find out what was the horizon within which Mill was given to look at the world, civilisation, and European and Indian societies. This thesis hopes to reconstruct what shaped Mill's mind, and what was the mind in which Mill thought about India.

This thesis is divided into two parts. The first is intended to show how the philosophers of the Scottish Enlightenment invented specific political languages to describe civilisation in general and the forms of societies in non-European societies in particular. The second part will discuss Mill's mode of thought, set his *History* in its political context, and compare the work with Mill's other works. In the first part of the thesis, it will be argued that, reacting to the decline of the feudal system and the challenge of commercial society, many Scottish civic moralists active in and around the 1750s, such as Lord Kames (Henry Home, 1696-1782), William Robertson (1721-1793), Adam Smith (1723-1790) and some others, developed a theory of historical interpretation, generally described by modern scholars as 'the four stages theory'. To these moralists, the four stages theory was designed to explain historical phenomena, and was also a *raison d'être* for political agendas, identifying what was possibly the best government for commercial society. More important, as the thesis will argue, thinking of the theory as universal, those Scots literati consciously employed it to view non-European society. They saw Asian society as set in an opulent continent and Indian

⁴⁵ Quoted from Arnold Hauser, *The Philosophy of Art History* (London, 1958), p. 128.

society as located in a wealthy country. Although some Scots literati, such as David Hume (1711-1776) and Lord Kames appreciated the high culture of Asian societies, many Scottish writers, such as Adam Smith, Robertson, Adam Ferguson (1723-1816), John Millar (1735-1801), John Logan (1748-1788) and William Alexander accepted Montesquieu's ideas of despotism and oriental societies.⁴⁶ These writers tried to interpret Asian societies in terms of the history of manners and social institutions, such as marriage and women's condition. The result was that Asian societies, particularly India and China, were considered as materially rich, but barbarous in terms of politics and social manners. This thesis will argue that the image of rich and barbarous Asia seemed paradoxical in the minds of some writers, who were active at the turn of the century, such as Francis Jeffrey (1771-1848) and James Mill. This thesis will argue that Jeffrey, like Alexander, consciously used the history of manners of a society to judge its state of civilisation. While the four stages theory suggested that the history of manners was the outcome of material conditions and pre-existing political institutions, those writers of the late Scottish Enlightenment suggested that manners *per se* were the most certain criterion of the degree of civilisation. By so doing, they advanced what might be called a non-materialist theory of civilisation.

This thesis will argue that such a non-materialist approach was particularly suitable for the religious and political conditions in the post-French Revolution age. Religious categories were also reinforced by public opinion. Charles Grant published an influential observation on Indian society based on his Christian outlook. This was re-published as a

⁴⁶ We have little information about William Alexander's life. The most useful account for this aspect is found in Jane Rendall's 'Introduction' to William Alexander's *The History of Women* (reprinted from 1782 edn., Bristol, 1995), pp. v-xxv.

Parliamentary Paper in 1812, and missions were allowed to be established in India in 1813. The political environment also encouraged a certain optimism. Dugald Stewart advanced a lineal view of historical progress for the late Scottish Enlightenment: it was ideas and knowledge, but not population, that made history progressive. Writers of the late Scottish Enlightenment were not interested in Asian societies for their own sakes; they generally saw the other worlds as problems to be solved, and found room for reforms in British society. In addition, during the Napoleonic wars, the British were engaged much more in international warfare against the French and explorations in Asia. In order to investigate the usefulness of Asian societies, the British envoys in Asia were not interested in arts and high culture, but paid much attention to social structures and statistical researches of economic and human power. In the newly conducted investigations in Asia, the poverty and 'backwardness' of Asia was discovered. Jeffrey popularised his idea of semi-barbarism in the most influential journal of the time, the *Edinburgh Review*. Moreover, in the Napoleonic wars, the practical problems of ruling India became even more pressing. This thesis will illustrate that Mill's *History* was to rationalise the newly founded belief in Asian poverty and backwardness, and to develop Jeffrey's idea of semibarbarism, in order to re-shape British administration in India.

The second part of the thesis will be devoted to discussing Mill's thought and the *History of British India*. It will argue that four Scottish Enlightenment *philosophes* were more responsible than the others for shaping Mill's views of history and society. Adam Smith's analysis of the development of North America inspired Mill to form his thought of free colonisation of India. Robertson's *History of America* (1777) demonstrated to Mill the interpretative method of the history of mind. Ferguson's admiration of vitality

and fortitude of political personalities prompted Mill to appreciate Muslim society in preference to its Hindu counterpart. Millar's history of manners and jurisprudence instructed Mill to look at the relation between social infrastructure and the progress of Indian society. But this thesis will emphasise that Mill's view of civilisation was saturated with Stewart's lineal view of historical progress and the belief in free will. The eighteenth century's four stages theory did not go so far as to suggest that human minds could foresee the progress of history. They thought of society as, in Hayek's words, a 'spontaneously generated order'; which moved from one stage to another without individuals' interference or even acknowledgement. Thus historical changes could only be understood *post facto*, when the process had been completed. Unlike Smith and Millar, Mill believed in free will. He believed that consciousness, as well as knowledge, was the key force in historical progress. Given such a belief, together with his imperialist or philanthropic sentiments, Mill believed that Indian society could and should break through its long period of stagnation. Last, this thesis will argue that Mill used his theory of semi-barbarism and the historical mind to argue that the British government was unjust, for it governed India from a mercantilist perspective. Mill contended that the British had valued the civilisation of India too highly, and that the mistaken evaluation caused the British to misplace English institutions in India. Following Smith's moral philosophy, Mill suggested that what Indian society sorely needed was the improvement of agriculture and the security of social order. This thesis will argue that though Mill used examples from European history to throw the backwardness of Indian society into great relief, he did not think that Indian society should imitate European institutions to create a good government. Mill suggested that under its semi-barbarous conditions,

Indian society needed a powerful state to make sure judicial distribution was properly executed. This thesis argues that Mill's sympathy with Benthamite theories of government was in tension with his belief in the historical mind and theory of semi-barbarism. Mill did not believe that a new Indian society could spring from its old social structures. Neither did he think that the modernisation of India would necessarily constitute Europeanisation as far as European institutions were concerned. Mill believed that Benthamite principles of government and methods, such as the panopticon penitentiary and the codification of laws, could improve Indian society on a different path from European history. As this thesis will discuss, Mill's imperialist or, better, philanthropic sentiment and reforming spirit was possessed, of course, at the expense of his ignorance of the national sentiment and subjectivity of the Indians.

CHAPTER 1

THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY SCOTTISH LITERATI'S VIEW OF CIVILISATION

i. The context of the four stages theory

In eighteenth-century Scotland, many writers held two distinct but complementary views on the nature of historical change. One was the four stages theory, the other the idea of progress. As the late Professor Ronald Meek observed, since the 1750s, many Scots literati had perceived the evolution of human institutions in terms of qualitatively distinct stages of progress. With slight modification or variation, Lord Kames, John Dalrymple (1726-1810), William Robertson, Adam Smith and John Millar (1735-1801), generally agreed that human institutions evolved around modes of subsistence: from hunting or fishing societies to those which are pastoral, farming and commercial. This view of the development of civilisation is commonly called by modern scholars the four stages theory.¹ Meek was particularly concerned with the methodological adequacy of the theory and its significance as a proto-Marxist theory of historical materialism. He compared the Scots' four stages theory with that of Turgot, Quesnay and some other French writers, and consciously identified Marx as their successor. Meek argued that these writers developed the concept of socio-economic progression. They, in the first place, all observed a general social evolution, and then moved to analyse the economic

¹ Ronald Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage* (Cambridge, 1976), particularly ch. 4. See also R. Meek, 'Smith, Turgot and the "Four Stages" Theory', *Smith, Marx & After* (London, 1979), pp. 18-32.

development responsible for it. So did Marx. The concept of 'mode of subsistence' was later naturally transformed by Marx into '*mode of production*'. Moreover, Meek described John Millar's method of penetrating 'beneath that common surface of events which occupies the details of the vulgar historian' as being in 'the manner of Marx.'² Meek was careful not to read Smith or John Millar into Marxist terminology but his interpretation was still forward-looking. Despite his valiant effort to construct the genealogy of the historical method, Meek failed to contextualise it. Apart from Meek's comparative approach, there are two contextual readings of the four stages theory. Pocock argues, from a civic humanist point of view, that this stadial theory legitimised the civil liberty existing in modern society without help from the unhistorical ideas of the ancient constitution or the social contract. On the other hand, Hont demonstrates that the theory also had the effect of assimilating the needs of commercial society into the tradition of natural jurisprudence.

In Pocock's reading of the stadial theory, Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun (1655-1716) is crucial. Participating in the 'Standing Army Controversy' of 1698-9, Fletcher denounced the use of a mercenary army. The growth of trade and taxation in modern times had contributed the decline of feudal tenures and kings to extend their power at the expense of their barons. At the same time, luxury had corrupted the virtue of the landed

² Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage*, pp. 164, 220, 229. Winch and Ignatieff disagree with Meek's Marxist materialist interpretation of the theory. Donald Winch, *Adam Smith's Politics* (Cambridge, 1978) and Michael Ignatieff, 'John Millar and Individualism', in *Wealth and Virtue*, ed. I. Hont and M. Ignatieff (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 317-43. Salter tries to reconcile the antagonism. He agrees with the materialist nature of the theory, but observes that the materialist perspective is not necessarily in the Marxist sense of the words, i.e. historical materialism or determinism. John Salter, 'Adam Smith on Feudalism, Commerce and Slavery', *History of Political Thought*, 13 (1992), 219-41. For a concise history of Roy Pascal and Ronald Meek's proto-Marxist interpretations of the four stages theory, see A. S. Skinner, *System of Social Science: Papers on Adam Smith* (Oxford, 1996), ch. 4.

classes. For Fletcher, the best way to curb royal power and the standing army on which it was based was to establish militias commanded by local officers, for those would not only check the growth of royal power, but would also check the spread of luxury and corruption.

the whole free people of any nation ought to be exercised to arms ... And I cannot see why arms should be denied to any man who is not a slave, since they are the only true badges of liberty; and ought never, but in times of utmost necessity, to be put into the hands of mercenaries or slaves ... ³

Back in Scotland, Fletcher promoted 'the fullest possible participation of citizens in government and defence'. He intended to qualify the time-honoured martial legacy of the country by civic virtue, suggesting that the landed class and the freeholders should co-ordinate and form a military community. Fletcher thought that if Scotland wanted to develop its economy and secure its independence, it needed a virtuous population.⁴ To later generations, the central question raised by Fletcher's political moralist language was how virtue could be continued in a commercial society with a division of labour; or, how feudal virtue could be sustained or integrated into modern society. Faced with the Fletcherian ideological challenge, Pocock concludes, 'Edinburgh and Glasgow intellectuals began to develop a philosophy of history based on the progress of commerce, the specialisation of labour and diversification of personality, and the limited participation in free but aristocratically controlled polities, which in their view

³ Quoted in John Robertson, *The Scottish Enlightenment and the Militia Issue* (Edinburgh, 1985), p. 25.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 36-8. For the importance of Fletcher's ideological parenthood of the Scottish Enlightenment, see N. T. Phillipson, 'The Scottish Enlightenment', in *Enlightenment in National Context*, ed. Roy Porter and Mikulas Teich (Cambridge, 1981), pp.19-40. For the fullest account of militia issue and Fletcherian challenge in the post-1745 age, see John Robertson, *The Scottish Enlightenment and the Militia Issue*, ch. 2 and Richard Sher, *Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh, 1985), ch. 6.

constituted the difference between ancient and modern society.’⁵ The four stages theory developed out of the social and ethical debates of its day, and was designed to relegate feudalism to the past.⁶

For Hont, the problem of the four stages theory lay less in defining feudalism than in defining the principles of commercial society. The point of the stadial theory was how to define or conceptualise the ‘fourth’ stage of social progress. Hont argues, on behalf of Adam Smith, that commercial society succeeded agricultural society only ‘in a purely quantitative sense’, for trade and commerce has existed since agricultural society was established.⁷ Following and tracing the Smithian definition of the theory, Hont argues that Pufendorf’s natural jurisprudence opened up the problem of sociability and commerce for Smith and other Scots. Pufendorf intended to rewrite Grotius’s idea of *appetitus societatis*, the ‘natural’ inclination for society. He observed that human beings, in contrast to animals, had an irremovable imbecility of physical powers, but, at the same time, had infinite and varied desires. The need for society, as Hobbesian individualism suggested, resulted from the need for self-preservation in the first place. But, for Pufendorf, the concept of society was based on Aristotle’s idea of community, not on the Aristotelian ‘political being’ or Hobbesian *civitas*. The idea of a society composed of individuals for mutual and selfish needs did not presuppose primitive equality, consensus contract, political rights or obligations. Society was needed solely for

⁵ J. G. A. Pocock, *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 374, and *The Machiavellian Moment*, pp. 427-35.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Istvan Hont, ‘The language of sociability and commerce: Samuel Pufendorf and the theoretical foundations of the “Four-Stages Theory”’, in *The Language of Political Theory in Early-Modern Europe*, ed. Anthony Pagden (Cambridge, 1987), p. 254.

‘Traffique’ or *commercium*.⁸ In other words, without the preservation of society, the instinct of self-preservation of individuals would not be qualified and realised. From the viewpoint of natural jurisprudence, sociability was as natural as the population grew, and absolutely crucial to the extent that in the complex agricultural society, society could only be preserved through the mechanism of sociability. First, after property rights had been thoroughly established, the family became ‘an island to itself’. ‘Neighbours’ were infallibly needed as mutual suppliers and consumers to fulfil the diversified needs of individuals. ‘The commerce of private-property owners relied on a reconstitution of society by the mechanism of sociability.’⁹ Second, in an agricultural society, ranks and orders were various and unequal. Some, for various reasons, were unable to possess lands. They could live only by selling their labour or skills. In ‘the mechanism of sociability’, ‘secondary acquisition of goods’ became possible for the poor to survive and for the rich to enjoy luxury. In this way, Pufendorf used a Hobbesian individualistic methodology to reconstruct Grotius’s theory of sociability. So far as the eighteenth century was concerned, Hont concludes, Pufendorfian jurisprudence had been adequate to explain the foundation of commercial society, but it had not been able to offer ‘a single theory of the history of civilisation’, i.e. the four stages theory.¹⁰

Pocock and Hont emphasise different aspects of the intellectual origin of the four stages theory. Fletcher had argued that feudal society had to be destroyed before commercial society was legitimised. On the other hand, Pufendorfian language presumed no such necessary discontinuity. It was intended to regulate the marketplaces within

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 264-5.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 271.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 276.

society and without *civitas*. For the present study, these two concepts of the four stages theory were problematic. As will be seen, the Scots drew on non-European as well as European history in developing a theory, which claimed a universal validity. But, to establish the universality of the theory, it was necessary to establish some criteria which could clearly and distinctly define each stage of social progress. From the Fletcherian perspective, one has to define what was feudalism, in the Pufendorbian what was commercial society. Was feudal society necessarily agricultural? Were nomadic Arabs living in political institutions similar to feudalism? According to Hont, Smith believed that commercial society differed from agricultural society only in degree not quality. This raises a series of questions. Under what circumstances could one say that a society had become a commercial society? Hunting, pasturing and farming as modes of subsistence were distinct. But what of commerce? Did a society become a commercial society when it had paper money? China had used paper money in the Song Dynasty to a great extent, but had discarded it afterwards. What did this mean? The insight of the four stages theory lay in the fact that the Scots theorists recognised that society progressed in a patterned form. The merit of the idea of ideal types of society lay not in the fact that they could perfectly explain non-European societies, but in the fact that it provided a framework, in which many Scottish writers were able to locate the non-European societies, which they observed. More importantly, only by so doing could they describe these societies in an intelligible manner and in understandable language. As will be seen, Smith, Millar, Robertson and many other major Scots literati active in the 1750s and 1760s, and Francis Jeffrey and James Mill active after the 1790s, all drew on the theory to discuss non-European societies. Indeed, as this thesis will emphasise, Mill's reform

project for India was rooted in this mode of thought.

But, not all writers needed to rationalise the manners and politics of commercial society in the framework of the stadial theory. At one level, the four stages theory could be seen as an intellectual device, invented to explore the moral and political problems of 'modern' society. The legacy of Fletcher and Pufendorf encouraged the eighteenth-century Scots literati to historicise civilisation in order to understand the *status quo*. In both of the Fletcherian and Pufendorbian contexts David Hume's discussion of the emergence of modern commercial society and its impact on politics was crucial. Many of his essays - 'Of the Delicacy of Taste and Passion', 'Of the liberty of the Press', 'Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences', 'Of Commerce', 'Of Refinement in the Arts' and many others - were eloquent apologies for the modern commercial society of his day. To use Pocock's words, Hume's essays, 'as contemporary history', were to communicate polite culture to his contemporaries, including female readers.¹¹ Commerce was the precondition of town-life, in which exchanges were composed not only of material goods, but also, and probably more importantly, of opinions; and commerce was also the basis on which modern polity, the concept of rights and government rested.¹² To reconcile the Fletcherian version of classical republican virtue and Pufendorbian sociability, Hume ingeniously promoted 'The Middle Station of Life'. This was a station that was 'more favourable to *Happiness*, as well as to *Virtue* and *Wisdom*'.¹³ Kames claimed that his *Sketches of the History of Man* (1774) was dedicated

¹¹ J. G. A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion* (Cambridge, 1999), ch. 12.

¹² N. T. Phillipson, 'Politics and Politeness in the Philosophy of David Hume', in *Politics, Politeness and Patriotism*, ed. Gordon J. Schochet (Washington DC, 1989), pp. 305-18.

¹³ Hume, 'Of the Middle Station of Life', in *Essays*, ed. E. F. Miller (Indianapolis, 1985), p. 551. One of the most ancient Chinese classics is *Zhung Yong* (*Middle Rank* or *The Moderate*), commonly attributed to

to 'those who are free from the corruption of opulence and depression of bodily labour.'¹⁴ Hume's synthesis of the Fletcherian and Pufendorbian languages of commercial society was the intellectual background for polite culture in eighteenth-century Scotland, particularly in the northern Athens of Edinburgh. Departing from his qualified defence of a commercial age, Hume was concerned with two essential perspectives: the relationship of government and the economy as well as that of general manners and the economy.

One of the marked features of Hume's *History of England* was that the *History* was meant to rewrite a history of liberty and authority, alternative to that of the Old Whig whose idea of history was based on the 'ancestor-worship' theory of the ancient constitution.¹⁵ To Hume, liberty was order and law. That is to say, liberty was always social; it was found in personal security from others. Accordingly, social liberty could be only applicable and liable under the guardianship of government. As Phillipson puts it, on behalf of Hume, 'political authority was the mother of justice and its regular exercise the necessary precondition of civilization'.¹⁶ Without knowledge of finance and taxes, however, the feudal king was incapable of establishing a standing army or a regular government. Thus, he shared conquered lands, i.e. wealth and power, with other chieftains and agreed to demands for an assembly when war threatened. Under

Confucius. The very basic doctrine of the work is against radical or extremist ideas of politics and manners. It is not clear if the great British literati, Hume, had been inspired by the work through the Jesuits.

¹⁴ Lord Kames, Henry Home, *Sketches of the History of Man* (2nd edn., 2 vols., Edinburgh, 1778), i, p. v.

¹⁵ Duncan Forbes, 'Introduction' to David Hume *The History of Great Britain* (Hamondsworth, 1970), p. 37.

¹⁶ N. T. Phillipson, *Hume* (London, 1989), p. 50.

feudalism, the German tribes were, perhaps, free, but procured no liberty.¹⁷ The emphasis on a regular government as the precondition of liberty could be seen as a reaction to the Trenchardian idea of the ‘Gothic balance’ of liberty, in which three estates were said harmoniously to keep mutual checks on each other, and to the Fletcherian idea of feudal virtue and classical republicanism.¹⁸ By defending commerce, Hume was to explain political culture in the framework of sociability. As Phillipson argues, in his series of articles, the journalism of the *Tatler* and *Spectator* in the early eighteenth century shaped a powerful political idiom. It demonstrated that ‘politeness could bridge the gap between prudence, honesty and virtue’.¹⁹ Opinion and conversation were the cornerstone of modern politics. Modernity, for Hume, was when the ‘femininity’ of polite letters and sociability joined the ‘masculinity’ of virtue. With such an idiom of politeness, Hume was able to describe Tudor history as despotism endorsed by public opinion. Because James II did not understand the public opinion behind the despotic practices of the Tudors, his blind imitation of the Tudors’ high-handed government, in Hume’s eyes, would ensure that he fell as its own victim.²⁰ Hume sympathised with James’ fall in the fashion of Greek tragedy, as he saw that opinion was, in modern society, the dynamic of history. Politics was reconsidered and reshaped in the public space of politeness, namely, sociability. For Hume, to understand the

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 130-3.

¹⁸ John Robertson, *The Scottish Enlightenment and the Militia Issue*, p. 36. For a detailed analysis of Hume’s reaction to Fletcherian ideological challenge, see ch. 2.

¹⁹ N. T. Phillipson, ‘Propriety, property and prudence: David Hume and defence of the Revolution’ in *Political Discourse in Early Modern Britain*, ed. N. T. Phillipson and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge, 1993), p. 309.

²⁰ Phillipson, *Hume*, pp. 119, 135-6 and *passim*. Duncan Forbes, *Hume’s Philosophical Politics*, pp. 319-20.

history of politics was, by and large, to understand the history of manners, the history of mind, and the history of civilisation.

Hume did not draw on the four stages theory. His philosophical history emphasised the progress and the character of modern society, as opposed to that of the feudal era. The political message in Hume's philosophical history was clear: the genuine legitimisation of government in commercial society was public opinion. Jeffrey and his Edinburgh reviewers followed the Humean thesis closely. James Mill's reform project in India was a complex reaction to the thesis. On the one hand, Mill urged the British public to institutionalise freedom of the press. On the other hand, he insisted that Indian society was in a state less advanced than feudal society. Considering the cultural chasm between the British subjects and Indian subjects, Mill tended to promote free colonisation, encouraging the British to emigrate into India in order to bring to the Indians European experience through every-day contacts. Like Amerindians, the Indians lived in the state of society that was similar to the European past. Thus, the British government had to consider how to govern the country and provide for the needs of people who were at different stages of civilisation.

Thus, the present study takes the four stages theory as a starting point, for two significant reasons. First, the Scots literati manifested and documented this theory by comparing many contemporary countries of other continents with examples of pre-modern or pre-feudal European society. The Scots believed the comparative method was legitimate because human nature was all the same. Lord Kames maintained that '[m]ankind through all ages have been the same.' In the same vein, Hume agreed that '[m]ankind are so much the same, in all times and places, that history informs us of

nothing new or strange in the particular.’²¹ On the one hand, the supposed universality of human nature and comparability of ages and societies enabled the Scots *philosophes* to draw on philosophy taught by example. On the other hand, the comparative method called the non-European world into debate. Contemporary non-European societies were thought as presenting ancient European history. In the four stages theory, these non-European countries were seen as examples of societies at different stages of development. It was in this context and with respect to this practical need that the Orient was understood by the Scots literati. The other point essential for the present study is that the four stages theory was transformed, indeed, simplified, into a new frame of discourse at the turn of the nineteenth century. This newly invented language of civilisation was not based on the ‘gradual progress’ or ‘several steps’ of civilisation, as the Enlightenment Scots liked to depict, but on the contrast between barbarism and civilisation. In the nineteenth century’s dualistic account of civilisation, writers used ‘semi-barbarism’ or a ‘half-civilised’ to describe Asian society, which was posited between the savage and civilised.²² The decline of the four stages theory called the idea of feudalism back into view. But this time, the theory was adapted to discuss not European, but rather non-European, history. The Humean idiom of the decline of European feudalism became a descriptive language in James Mill’s hands in describing Indian and other non-European societies. As will be seen, Dugald Stewart was responsible for the decline of the four stages theory, while Francis Jeffrey was responsible for the transformation of the language. But it was James Mill who tried to

²¹ Quoted from Spadafora, *The Idea of Progress*, pp. 268, 269.

²² This point will be discussed in chapters 4 and 5.

rationalise and theorise the new discourse on civilisation and history. Why did the four stages theory decline? The following discussions will first highlight some important aspects of the stadial theory that were to be assimilated and transformed by less well known philosophical historians, who are to be discussed in the second chapter. Then, they will expose the intrinsic theoretical difficulty that contributed to its own decline after the French Revolution.

ii. Savage society and civilisation in the four stages theory

As Hont correctly observes, the four stages theory is a 'single theory of the history of civilisation'.²³ But why was such a single stadial theory needed? First, the nature of the four stages theory was an intellectual device that helped historians create ideal-typical societies in which corresponding manners, personalities and social institutions were located and perceived. Also, the typological and sociological study of human institutions strongly implied an idea of progress: the growth of population, the refinement of manners and arts, the diversification of personalities and many other developments. Eighteenth-century Scots literati described these historical phenomena as 'general improvement'.

In his *Historical Law-Tracts* (1761), Kames was concerned with the progress of legal thought as corresponding developments in the general improvement of society.

A rational enquirer is no less entertained than instructed, in tracing the progress of manners, of laws, of arts, from their birth to their present maturity. ... Law in particular, becomes then only a rational study, when it is traced historically, from its first rudiments among savages, through successive changes, to its highest improvements in a civilized

²³ Hont, 'The language of sociability and commerce', p. 276.

society.²⁴

Perceiving history according to the four stages theory, Kames defined savage society in legal terms. First, it had no criminal jurisdiction. Instead, revenge or punishment in private hands was the method that savages employed to resolve disagreements.

No production of art or nature is more imperfect than is government in its infancy, comprehending no sort of jurisdiction, civil or criminal. What can more tend to break the peace of society and to promote universal discord, than that every man should be the judge in his own cause, and inflict punishment according to his own judgement?²⁵

In contrast to savage society or barbarism, civilisation meant the monopoly of violence was possessed by the state with its creation of civil and criminal laws. The other point characterising savage society was that it did not have a concept of property rights.

The man who kills and eats, who sows and reaps, at his own pleasure, independent of another's will, is naturally deemed proprietor. The grossest savages understand power without right, of which they are made sensible by daily acts of violence: but property without possession is a conception too abstract for a savage, or for any person who has not studied the principles of law.²⁶

Kames remarked that only in agricultural society did men need to think about the legal fiction of property. The relation of land-property in agricultural society introduced the 'right of independent possession'.²⁷ The idea of 'right of independent possession' was the legal and social condition for the commercial stage of society to become possible.

... the enlarged notion of property, by annexing to it a power of alienation, obtained first in moveables: and indeed society could scarce subsist without such a power; at least as far as is necessary for exchanging commodities, and carrying on commerce.²⁸

²⁴ Kames, Lord, Preface to *Historical Law-Tracts* (3rd edn., Edinburgh, 1776), p. iii.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 103-6.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

In short, civilisation meant the establishment of the authority of the state. None the less, the authority could be realised only by mutual agreements, in the same manner as property right was founded.

In his *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, Smith much more explicitly and systematically expanded Kames's thesis that punishment varied as civilisation advanced. First, Smith agreed with Kames that from a natural jurisprudence viewpoint, settlement was the threshold of civilisation. The society that knew nothing about agriculture was savage.

If we should suppose 10 or 12 persons of different sexes settled in an uninhabited island ... Their sole business would be hunting the wild beasts or catching the fishes. ... This is the age of hunters. ... The Tartars and Arabians subsist almost entirely by their flocks and herds. The Arabs have a little agriculture, but Tartars none at all. The whole of the savage nations which subsist by flocks have no notion of cultivating the ground. ... But when a society becomes numerous they would find a difficulty in supporting themselves by herds and flocks. Then they would naturally turn themselves to the cultivation of land ... And by this means they would gradually advance in to the age of agriculture. As society was farther improved ... They would exchange with one another what they produced more than was necessary for their support, and get in exchange for them the commodities they stood in need of and did not produce themselves. This exchange of commodities extends in time not only betwixt the individualls of the same society but betwixt those of different nations.²⁹

Smith in his later lectures observed that, in agricultural society, government and legislation commenced and the differentiation of wealth among a nation started to increase. And wealth commanded authority.³⁰ To be sure, Smith was by no means a materialist. He identified four human qualities that gave persons authority on which

²⁹ Adam Smith, *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, ed. R.L. Meek *et al.* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 14-6.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 205, 208. In the *Report dated 1776*, Smith defined 'shepherds' as nomadic tribes. The inconsistency is probably because of the note taker's mistake, or because Smith had changed his definition by then. 'The Arabs and Tartars who had always been shepherds have on many occasions made the most dreadful havoc. ... They take their whole flocks and herds into the field along with them, and whoever is overcome loses both his people and wealth. The victorious nation follows it's flocks, and pursues it's conquest, and if it comes into a cultivated country with such number of men, it is quite irresistible. It was in this manner that Mahomet ravaged all Asia.' *Ibid.*, p. 408.

government was based: '[s]uperiour age, superior abilities of body and of mind, ancient family, and superiour wealth.'³¹ The four stages theory not only enabled Smith to discuss the origin of justice and government, but also how 'authority and utility' were vested in persons at different stages of society. He maintained that in the age of hunters 'there can be very little government of any sort', because there was neither subordination nor centralisation of authority.³² Departing from the original condition of human society, Smith argued that in different ages of society, 'laws and regulations with regard to property must be very different.' And the more advanced a society was, the more sophisticated its laws should be to prevent the infringement of property.³³ Smith was greatly concerned with 'historical jurisprudence'.³⁴ Moreover, the four stages theory not only guided the Scots in reading the changes in laws and societies over time, but also in comparing European society with non-European societies existing concurrently. The theory, then, became one of the most powerful intellectual devices for the Scots to reflect on non-European countries in the second half of the eighteenth century. Historical jurisprudence was actually comparative jurisprudence.³⁵ As will be seen, Asian society was relevant to the practical need of comparison discussed by Smith and many Scots.

William Robertson was another eminent Scottish historian who drew on the four stages theory to grasp the changes of historical phenomena. Robertson's work on the *History of America* is particularly relevant to the present study because it was the model

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 402.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 40. Smith frequently referred to this point. *Ibid.*, pp. 201-2, 207, 213.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

³⁴ Knud Haakonssen, *The Science of a Legislator* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 154-77.

³⁵ 'I have now gone thro all the forms of government which have existed in the world, as far as we have any account ...'. Smith, *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, p. 244.

for Mill's *History of British India*. Mill confessed, in the Preface to the *History* that he was encouraged by Robertson's writing on America to believe that an historian need not visit the country that he was writing about. Apart from this methodological factor, however, Mill was indebted to Robertson's history for a subtler reason. In his remarks on the *History of America*, Edmund Burke detected the presence of the four stages theory. Burke announced:

We need no longer go to history to trace it in all stages and periods. History, from its comparative youth, is but a poor instructor. ... there is no state or gradation of barbarism, and no mode of refinement which we have not at the same moment under our view; the very different civility of Europe and of China; the barbarism of Persia and of Abyssinia; the erratic manners of Tartary and of Arabia; the savage state of North America and of New Zealand. ... You have employed philosophy to judge on manners and from manners you have drawn new resources for philosophy. I only think that in one or two points you have hardly done justice to the savage character.³⁶

By 'History', Burke probably meant antiquarian skill rather than narrative history. To be sure, Burke understood the four stages theory in a similar manner to Stewart, who mistook the stadial approach as 'conjectural' history, taking contemporary countries as examples of ancient nations. Robertson remarked that in order to understand a country, the most important thing to identify was the mode of subsistence.³⁷ Probably because Burke was not thoroughly aware of the Scottish bent of thought on the stadial theory, he could not fully appreciate all of Robertson's description of the Amerindians. Robertson suggested that the state of the human mind corresponded to a certain state of material development.

³⁶ Quoted from Dugald Stewart, *The Collected Works of Dugald Stewart*, ed. William Hamilton (10 vols., Edinburgh, 1854-58), x, 154.

³⁷ Christopher Berry, *Social Theory and the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh, 1997), p. 93. Karen O'Brien, *Narratives of Enlightenment: Cosmopolitan History from Voltaire to Gibbon* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 133.

When the religious opinions of any people are neither the result of rational inquiry, nor derived from the instructions of revelation, they must need to be wild and extravagant. Barbarous nations are incapable of the former, and have not been blessed with the advantages arising from the latter.³⁸

Robertson held an organic view of society, and believed that the progress of a nation could be compared with the mental development of an individual. 'As the individual advances from the ignorance and imbecility of the infant state, to vigour and maturity of understanding, something similar to this may be advanced in the progress of the species.'³⁹

In order to complete the history of the human mind, and attain to a perfect knowledge of its nature and operations, we must contemplate man in all those various situations wherein he has been placed. We must follow him in his progress through the different stages of society, as he gradually advances from the infant state of civil life towards its maturity and decline.⁴⁰

Phillipson argues that Robertson described the Amerindian mind based on the Humean thesis that human understanding resulted from culture. The qualitatively distinct stages of the societies of the Amerindians and their Spanish conquerors necessarily created a great cultural chasm between them, which the Spaniards needed to close by converting the Indians to Christianity. Robertson was able to point out the futility of this enterprise as the Amerindians could not possibly understand Christian doctrines.⁴¹ To be sure, sympathy was grounded on the theory that human minds were corresponding to the

³⁸ Robertson, *History of America* (reprinted from 1792 edn., 3 vols., London, 1996), ii, 32.

³⁹ Quoted from K. O'Brien, *Narratives of Enlightenment*, p. 159.

⁴⁰ Robertson, *History of America*, ii, 50.

⁴¹ N. T. Phillipson, 'Providence and progress: an introduction to the historical thought of William Robertson', in *William Robertson and the Expansion of Empire*, ed. Stewart J. Brown (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 64ff. Phillipson suggests that this Humean sceptical theory of mind enabled Robertson to be sympathetic to missionaries, while O'Brien suggests that Robertson in *History of America* lost his usual Scottish virtue of sympathy, but constantly infantilised the natives. Karen O'Brien, 'Between Enlightenment and Stadiac History: William Robertson on the History of Europe', *British Journal for Eighteenth Century Studies*, 16 (1993), 60; and *Narratives of Enlightenment*, p. 159.

immediate environment. As will be seen, James Mill emphatically drew on the Robertsonian history of mind in his *History of British India*.

Robertson's *History of America* had much to do with colonial policy. He wrote the history as a moralist as well as a political economist in the Scottish sense. In Defoe's spirit, Robertson described a paradox of the providence represented in America.

The effects of human ingenuity and labour are more extensive and considerable, than even our own vanity is apt at first to imagine. When we survey the face of the habitable globe, no small part of that fertility and beauty, which we ascribe to the hand of nature, is the work of man. ... But in the New World, the state of mankind was ruder, and the aspect of Nature extremely different. ... Countries, occupied by such people, were almost in the same state as if they had been without inhabitants.⁴²

Robertson looked down on the Spaniards who embarked to America with 'nothing but their eager expectation of finding mines of gold'.⁴³ Instead, he thought that industry and commerce, not religious conversion, were the primary concerns. The Robertsonian idea of colonialism was particularly interested in the general improvement of society. Robertson's concern was in accord with Smith's famous remonstrance against the Spanish and Portuguese monopoly in America in Book IV of *Wealth of Nations*. James Mill, along with many other *Edinburgh* reviewers, illustrated this line of argument.

Robertson recognised the peculiar Mexican and Peruvian advancements of society. They had 'perfectly understood' private property, and had agriculture and industry. Their populations were great. They knew 'the separation of professions' and 'distinction of ranks'.⁴⁴ In the Mexican empire, 'justice was administered ... with a degree of order and

⁴² Robertson, *History of America*, ii, 14-5.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁴⁴ Robertson, *History of America*, iii, 161, 163-5.

equity resembling what takes place in societies highly civilized'.⁴⁵ They also had fine arts, compositions and even philosophy. Nevertheless, Robertson admitted that the Mexicans and Peruvians 'had not proceeded far beyond the first stage in that progress which must be completed before any people can be ranked among polished nations'.⁴⁶ The very reason that Robertson still treated these two Amerindian empires as rude societies was that their religion and rites were barbarous. Robertson remarked that the most certain sign of deciding where the Mexican and Peruvian societies lay on the scale of civilisation was their minds, as reflected in their religious tenets. 'For nations, long after their ideas begin to enlarge, and their manners to refine, adhere to systems of superstition founded on the crude conception of early ages. From the genius of the Mexican religion we may, however, form a most just conclusion with respect to its influence upon the character of the people. The aspect of superstition in Mexico was gloomy and atrocious. Its divinities were clothed with terror, and delighted in vengeance'.⁴⁷ Likewise, Peruvian society 'notwithstanding so many particulars, which seem to indicate an high degree of improvement', was still, Robertson concluded, 'in the first stages of its transition from barbarism to civilization'.⁴⁸

One of Robertson's objectives in writing the *History of America* was to repudiate Spanish writers' representations of the Mexican and Peruvian empires, as highly civilised. Robertson suggested that comparison was not the best method of estimating

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 172.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 181-3. In his recent study, Hargraves notices that Robertson used the two stages theory in describing the Mexican and Peruvian societies. I thank him for bringing my attention to this point. Neil K. Hargraves, 'The Language of Character and the Nature of Events in the Historical Narratives of William Robertson', unpublished Ph.D. Thesis (University of Edinburgh, 1999), p. 138.

⁴⁷ Robertson, *History of America*, iii, 198.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 223.

the civilisation of a society. The historian had to find an objective criterion of civilisation. He also questioned the hyperbole of the Spanish writers' language.

The Spaniards, when they first touched on the Mexican coast, were so much struck with the appearance of attainments in policy and in the arts of life, far superior to those of the rude tribes with which they were hitherto acquainted, that they fancied they had at length discovered a civilized people in the New World. This comparison between the people of Mexico and their uncultivated neighbours, they appear to have kept constantly in view, and observing with admiration many things which marked the pre-eminence of the former, they employ in describing their imperfect policy and infant arts, such terms as are applicable to the institutions of men far beyond them in improvement. ... By drawing a parallel between them and those of people so much less civilized, they raised their own ideas too high. ... But though we may admit, that the warm imagination of the Spanish writers had added some embellishment to their descriptions, this will not justify the decisive and peremptory tone, with which several authors pronounce all their accounts of the Mexican power, policy and laws, to be the fictions of men who wished to deceive, or who delighted in the marvellous. ... Eye witnesses relate what they beheld.⁴⁹

Mill's *History of India* mimicked Robertson's accusation about the Spanish writers' exaggeration when describing Mexican civilisation. He remarked that European writers were marvel-lovers.

We receive indeed the accounts of Hindu chronology, not from the incredulous historians of Greece and Rome, but from men who had seen the people; whose imagination had been powerfully affected by the spectacle of a new system of manners, arts, institutions, and ideas; who naturally expected to augment the opinion of their own consequence, by the greatness of the wonders which they had been favoured to behold; and whose astonishment, admiration, and enthusiasm, for a time, successfully propagated themselves.⁵⁰

In language truly similar to which Robertson had employed to describe the Mexican society in its progress to civilisation, Mill remarked that 'The Hindus had made considerable progress beyond the first and lowest stage of human society', but they were still not a polished nation.⁵¹ Indeed, it is only a little exaggeration to comment that Mill

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 194-6.

⁵⁰ Mill, *History*, i, 113.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 231.

was Mexicanising the Indians in the Robertsonian sense.

In terms of historiography, the success of the *History of America* lay in the fact that Robertson's stadial theory was presented as exposing the contrast between the civilised European society and the rudeness of the Amerindians, rather than showing the gradual and pattern-like progress of societies. The fascination with the contrast between the barbarous and the civilised forms of society was even more conspicuous in Adam Ferguson's *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*. Ferguson divided history into three categories - savage, barbarous and polished - and was much more apt to think of them in value-terms. Ferguson wanted to compare and contrast the rudeness and politeness of nations, because he was concerned with how to preserve civil society from barbarous nations.⁵² After the late eighteenth century, most Scottish intellectuals lost sight of the four stages theory, as a scientific or sociological understanding of human society. Walter Scott, a student of Robertson's, understood this point well. His own *Tales of a Grandfather* (History of Scotland) was a close imitation of Robertson's *History of Scotland*. In fact, Chapter 34 with the title, 'Progress of Civilization in Society' is a popularised version of Robertson's 'A View of the Progress of Society in Europe', the Preface to *The History of the Reign of Charles V*. In the Preface, Robertson admitted that his intention in writing the *History of Charles V* was to trace European institutions from 'barbarism to refinement'.⁵³ Likewise, Scott professed that 'tribes and nations' could 'go on by gradual steps from being a wild horde of naked barbarians, till they become a

⁵² See Forbes's Introduction to Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* (Edinburgh, 1966), p. xix. Part II of the work is 'Of the History of Rude Nations' and Part III and IV are the history of commerce and arts.

⁵³ Robertson, 'A View of the Progress of Society in Europe', *The Works of William Robertson* ed. Robert Lynam (12 vols., London, 1824), iv, 9-181; 118-9.

powerful and civilized people'.⁵⁴ But Scott found British overseas colonies only through a contrasting perspective:

[the] history of colonies has in it some points of peculiar interest as illustrating human nature. On such occasions the extremes of civilized and savage life are suddenly and strongly brought into contact with each other and the results are as interesting to the moral observer as those which take place on the mixture of chemical substance are to the physical investigator.⁵⁵

This tendency to contrast the civilised with the savage or barbarous influenced much popular historical writing in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

The person who was most responsible for the disappearance of the four stages theory in the late eighteenth century was Dugald Stewart. In his *Account of the Life and Writings of William Robertson*, Stewart praised the *History of America*; but he saw the work as contrasting the savage to the civilised, rather than depicting the stadial progress of society.

The penetration and sagacity displayed in his delineation of savage manners, and the unbiassed good sense with which he has contrasted that state of society with civilized life ... have been much and deservedly admired.⁵⁶

The other worlds were often seen by the late Scottish Enlightenment writers through

⁵⁴ Walter Scott, *Tales of a Grandfather* in *Scott's Miscellaneous Prose Works*, Series Two, (Edinburgh, 1847), p. 138. Scott maintained that '[t]he steps by which a nation advances from the natural and simple state...into the more complicated system in which ranks are distinguished from each other, are called the progress of society, or civilization.' p. 140. For discussions of Scott's ideas of history, see M. Phillips, 'Macaulay, Scott and the Literary Challenge to Historiography', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 50 (1989), 117-33, and Peter D. Garside, 'Scott and the "Philosophical" historians', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 36 (1975), 497-512.

⁵⁵ Quoted from Spadafora, *The Idea of Progress*, p. 396. A parallel development of the interest in the 'savage/citizen' controversy lies in Goguet and Gibbon's works. They both draw on the qualitatively different social conditions and identify separate knowledge of self in the vagrant people of the former and the 'sedentary civilization' of the latter. J. G. A. Pocock, 'Tangata Whenua and Enlightenment Anthropology', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 26 (1992), 28-53; particularly, 38-40.

⁵⁶ Robertson, *History of Scotland* (16th edn., 3 vols., London, 1802), i, 108.

contrast with the civilised, namely, European society. Colonial history was often viewed as a defect or problem, not as a 'natural' development. There were calls for colonial reform. Scott himself was a devoted philanthropist, if not very active, toward India, supporting educational and financial aid to the country.⁵⁷ Indeed, the idea of semi-barbarism shared by Jeffrey and Mill was a product of the contrast between civilised and savage societies. Colonial history was seen through this polarisation of civilisation. The nineteenth-century Scots saw problems that their predecessors probably would not recognise.

iii. The four stages theory and the history of manners

The last important Scottish stadial historian before the French Revolution was John Millar. His *Observations Concerning the Distinction of Ranks in Society* was published in 1771, edited and re-published as *The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks* in 1779. Millar's works were further developments of Smith's theory of jurisprudence. In his lectures on jurisprudence, Smith explained how the 'Impartial Spectator' would affect people's behaviour and judgement of others' actions, with regard to propriety and justice. With this psychological theory, Smith's moral philosophy, which included ethics and laws, explained to readers that morality and justice were both subject to change. Justice was, indeed, an historical problem. Given this conviction, Smith was able to give accounts of social manners that were related to possessions and rights, or liberty. In hunting societies, the notion of property was absent. One could only commit a violation of encroachment by taking things from another's hands. When society entered into the

⁵⁷ George D. Bearce, *British Attitudes towards India, 1784-1858* (London, 1961), p. 95.

pastoral and agricultural ages, the notion of property was extended to include moveable and non-moveable items, such as land. In commercial society, the items of property diversified even further. Freedom of social behaviour gradually diminished, while liberty increased.

Following the scheme of the four stages theory, Millar explained to readers how the history of manners, subordination and authority varied as society moved from a hunting society through pasturing and farming into that of commercial society. For instance, he argued that because of the poverty in savage society, women had no rights of inheritance. For the same reason, Africans, Asians, Americans and ancient Germans bought their wives: 'the conclusion of a bargain of this nature, together with the payment of the price, has therefore become the most usual form of solemnity in the celebration of their marriage'.⁵⁸ Millar maintained that with the development of social wealth, women received better treatment both in the family and the society. In feudal society, 'romantic and extravagant passions' between sexes were the subjects of minstrels as much as chivalric courage. Irregular passions were consonant with irregular government.⁵⁹ In commercial society,

[f]rom the cultivation of arts and peace, the different members of society are more and more united, ... As they become more civilized, they perceive the advantages of establishing a regular government; and different tribes who lived in a state of independence, are restrained from injuring one another, and reduced under subjection to the laws. ... The men and women of different families are permitted to converse with more ease and freedom, and meet with less opposition to the indulgence of their inclination.

But while the fair sex becomes less frequently the objects of those romantic and extravagant passions, which in some measure arise from the disorders of society, they are more universally regarded upon account of their useful or agreeable talents. ...

In the society in which manufacture and commerce had reached to a great extent ...

⁵⁸ Millar, *The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks* (reprinted from 1806 edn., Bristol, 1990), p. 39.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 65-74.

the women become, neither the slaves, nor the idols of the other sex, but the friends and companions.⁶⁰

Millar tried to systematise the sexual politics within and beyond the family on the framework of the four stages theory.⁶¹ Montesquieu's sociology or armchair anthropology has discussed the phenomena of slavery, women's confinement, polygamy and many other institutions and manners in the Orient, particularly in the *Spirit of the Laws*. Smith and Millar's works, with the four stages theory, were temporalising the issue of social manners. As will be seen, the historical dimension of the study of manners became an intellectual stock-in-trade in many Scottish writers' works, including that of James Mill. Arguing that gender relations were determined by climate, Montesquieu intended to de-politicise gender relationships in Asia. As will be seen, Smith, Millar and some other Scots were more sensitive about the problem of liberty in gender relations.⁶²

Nevertheless, there were two points in the Millarian legacy that would leave problems for James Mill to ponder on. First, the mode of subsistence and the state of material conditions was, for Millar, the most important, but not the sole, variable affecting social manners and institutions. For example, Millar identified feudal society as belonging to the age of agriculture, but described the state and people as 'Gothicized'

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 88-9.

⁶¹ Olson gives a clear and succinct account of Millar's gender politics in the Scottish academic tradition of Roman law and moral philosophy. Richard Olson, 'Sex and status in Scottish Enlightenment social science: John Millar and the sociology of gender roles', *History of the Human Sciences*, 11 (1998), 73-100.

⁶² For an useful account of Millar's view of women's condition and jurisprudence, see Paul Bowles, 'John Millar, the four-stages theory, and women's position in society', *History of Political Economy*, 16 (1984), 619-38.

and 'barbarous'.⁶³ On the other hand, Millar felt constrained to describe the society of Ossian as 'barbarous', though its tenderness could hardly be equalled in 'the most refined productions of a civilized age'.⁶⁴ The ambivalent attitude towards Ossian's society was also found in Kames. Kames claimed that the purpose of his *Sketches of the History of Man* was to trace out human progress 'toward maturity in different nations'.⁶⁵ On the one hand, he admitted that the Ossianic community belonged to a hunters' society; on the other hand, he appreciated the Ossianic people's manners, particularly the way men treated women equally.⁶⁶ Kames paradoxically attributed the exceptionally good quality of Ossianic society to the climate, despite the fact that he had rejected Montesquieu's determinism and Buffon's racial theory.⁶⁷ If in the age of hunters or shepherds, people could behave tenderly and agreeably, then, in agricultural and commercial societies, people could equally possibly behave in a savage and uncivilised manner. Thus, it was not easy to hold the mode of subsistence as 'the' standard of civilisation. Kames or Millar did not hold any single standard, such as the mode of subsistence, as the decisive and determining cause of social institutions, manners and government. Many Enlightenment Scots might fall victim to inconsistency in their analyses of social and economic history. But, as Macfie perceptively observes, the inconsistencies 'are the reflections of the methods. Each aspect, the analytical, the

⁶³ John Millar, *Observation of the Distinction of Ranks in Society* (London, 1773), pp. 64-5, 69-70.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁶⁵ Kames, *Sketches*, i, 84.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, i, 326-7, ii, 412. Critics tend to attribute Kames's ambivalence towards believing the authenticity of Ossianic poems to his sentiments of national patriotism. See George W. Stocking, Jr., 'Scotland as the Model of Mankind: Lord Kames's Philosophical View of Civilization', in *Toward a Science of Man: Essays in the History of Anthropology*, ed. Timothy H. H. Thoresen (Chicago, 1975), pp. 65-89.

⁶⁷ Kames, *Sketches*, i, 27, 100.

historical, the contemporary-comparative (or sociological), is dealt with in turn. The inconsistencies arise out of these different aspects, and so out of real conditions.'⁶⁸ Mill was immensely saturated in the Scottish tradition of philosophical history, but his seminal and problematic point in the *History of British India* was to demonstrate how to set up clear and distinct criteria to pin down every society on the scale of civilisation, for he was gravely concerned with reform - both in India and England.⁶⁹

Millar also observed that some supposedly 'civilised' nations still practised 'barbarous' customs. Millar himself did not try to explain why the apparent incongruity happened. He remarked that the 'ancient custom, that the husband should buy his wife from her relations, remains at the present among the Chinese; who, notwithstanding their opulence, and their improvement in arts, are still so wonderfully tenacious of the usage introduced in a barbarous period.'⁷⁰ China or India were often regarded by eighteenth-century British writers as exceptions to many of the rules of social progress that they tried to make. For instance, Hume suggested a country which had a good foreign trade would give rise to domestic industry. Even if foreign trade later declined, the nation would remain powerful and opulent. Through the mechanism of commerce and exchange, the whole population in the country would enjoy home commodities. Hume argued that China was an opulent country, 'though it has very little commerce beyond its own territories'.⁷¹ The Scots of the Enlightenment by no means tried to set rigid rules for

⁶⁸ Here Macfie refers specifically to Smith. But obviously it is also the case for Millar, as Macfie in other places discusses. A. L. Macfie, *The Individual in Society: Papers on Adam Smith* (London, 1967), pp. 29-30. See also his 'John Millar -- A Bridge between Adam Smith and Nineteenth Century Social Thinkers?', in *ibid.*, pp. 141-51.

⁶⁹ Mukherjee, *Sir William Jones*, p. 111. Winch, *James Mill*, pp. 383ff.

⁷⁰ Millar, *The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, p. 41.

⁷¹ Hume, 'Of Commerce', *Essays*, p. 264.



human society. Exceptions were present because experience told them so. But the nineteenth-century writers knew more about China and India. They knew that China was not as tranquil as Montesquieu's or Voltaire's generation had thought it to be; it was frequently subject to rebellions and *coups d'état* throughout its history. They also knew that China and India were not as opulent as the literati thought. Would, then, this newly received information compel the re-writing of stadial history? In Mill's writing on Asia or India, there was no inconsistency among Asian or Indian manners, mind, and societies. Everything was perfectly bent into a framework of stadial history. James Mill's *History* was a reaction to the supposed incongruity between social manners and the stadial theory.

iv. The four stages theory and the idea of progress

The four stages theory strongly implies the idea of progress. But it is worthy of note that in the eighteenth century the idea of progress was certainly qualified, and not as absolute as the nineteenth-century philosophical historians believed. The Enlightenment Scots' knowledge of Roman history taught them that civilisation could be 'corrupted' or 'destroyed'. Robertson observed that modern European history was a re-starting of civilisation, after the fall of Roman Empire. Robertson vividly compared the barbarians' demolition of Roman civilisation with the modern Europeans' restoration of it.

as they [the barbarians] did not comprehend either the merit or utility of the Roman arts, they destroyed the monuments of them with an industry not inferior to that with which their posterity have since studied to preserve or to recover them.⁷²

⁷² See Robertson, 'A View of the Progress of Society in Europe', pp. 32, 73-4.

The story of the Renaissance was the story of European cyclical history. Kames's belief in progress was also uncertain. Seeing 'justice and good manners' prevalent in commercial society, Kames cried out: '[b]ut is our progress toward the perfection of society to stop here?'⁷³ On the other hand, he was aware of the fact that commerce naturally brings with it luxury, on which 'the Romans abandoned themselves to every vice: they became in particular wonderfully avaricious, breaking through every restraint of justice and humanity.'⁷⁴ Civilisation was self-contradictory.⁷⁵ The different attitudes toward civilisation were also marked in Adam Ferguson's works. He admitted that 'man is susceptible of improvement, and has in himself a principle of progression, and desire of perfection'.⁷⁶ On the other hand, he professed 'the progress of society to what we call the height of national greatness, is not more natural, than their return to weakness and obscurity is necessary and unavoidable.'⁷⁷ Roman history taught the Scots to be classical republicans and to be concerned with the luxury that commerce and trade might generate, and which could destroy society itself. To use Winch's words, they shared the attitude of 'historical realism' to social progress.⁷⁸ They were preoccupied with unintended consequences of commerce and opulence, and believed that, on the occasions of corruption, cyclical history was waiting out there as civilisation would decline into barbarity again.⁷⁹ There was, for the literati, always a tension, or, to use Pocock's words,

⁷³ Kames, *Sketches*, i, 203.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 403.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 346.

⁷⁶ Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, ed. Duncan Forbes (Edinburgh, 1966), p. 8.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.208.

⁷⁸ Winch, *Adam Smith's Politics*, p. 71.

⁷⁹ J. G. A. Pocock, 'Gibbon and the shepherds: the stages of society in the *Decline and Fall*', *History of European Ideas*, 2 (1981), 193-202; 195-6.

a dialectic sense in their view of historical progress.⁸⁰ It is also worth noting, however, that decadence, decline or circularity of civilisation was, for the Scots literati, a possible, but not an unavoidable destination of history. Ferguson thought and believed that '[h]uman affairs, in the mean time, continue their progress'.⁸¹ In the uncertainty about the progress of civilisation, the Scots theorists could only try to reduce the possibility of the future decline of civilisation. Despite their general worries about the lack of republican or military virtue in modern society, many Scots were confident about their ability to defend their society. Robertson held that since the sixteenth century the Christian armies had acquired superiority in the arts of war over the Turks.⁸² Ferguson agreed that

rude nations ... always yield to the superior arts, and the discipline of more civilized nations. Hence the Romans were able to over-run the provinces of Gaul, Germany, and Britain; and hence the Europeans have a growing ascendancy over the nations of Africa and America.⁸³

Indeed, Ferguson's ideas of progress blended with a strong implication of classical republicanism, or even vitalism. Emphasising vigour, chivalry and fortitude, Ferguson's idea of civilisation was distinct from Hume's or Smith's polite culture of commercial society.

... a nation consisting of degenerate and cowardly men, is weak; a nation consisting of vigorous, public-spirited, and resolute men, is strong. ... The strength of nations consists in the wealth, the numbers, and the character, of their people. ... If we supposed, that

⁸⁰ J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, pp. 501ff. This ambivalence in the Scots literati's attitudes to progress has been well recognised. Some critics describe it as a problematic 'paradox'. See R. L. Heibroner, 'The paradox of progress: decline and decay in the *Wealth of Nations*', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 34 (1973), 243-62; Lisa Hill, 'Adam Ferguson and the paradox of progress and decline', *History of Political Thought*, 18 (1997), 677-706.

⁸¹ Ferguson, *Essay*, p. 121.

⁸² Robertson, 'A View of the Progress of Society in Europe', p. 181.

⁸³ Ferguson, *Essay*, p. 95.

together with these advantages, the military character of a people remains, or is improved, it must follow, that what is gained in civilization, is a real increase of strength; and that the ruin of nations could never take its rise from themselves.⁸⁴

In the last decade of the eighteenth century and the first of the nineteenth, the British popular belief in civilisation was based on a Fergusonian definition of vitalism, not a Humean definition of politeness. The most famed and, at the very same time, notorious Oriental figure in the age was Tipu Sultan, because he embodied vigour and ‘brutality’ at the same time. James Mill in his *History* confidently asserted that military victory meant superiority of civilisation. He might have had Ferguson’s words in mind.⁸⁵

Above all, although the Enlightenment Scots believed in historical progress, they did not hold that the force of progress was in human hands. On the contrary, historical progress was unfolded in a blind manner. They agreed that the scope and perspective that humans could foresee in human actions was embarrassingly limited. Genuine social order was created not by law-makers or even the intentions of individuals or groups of people, but by the collective actions and interactions of the whole society. Before the French Revolution, such a view of the limited and uncertain progress of human history played a predominant role in the Scots’ thoughts of liberty. Progress was, for the Enlightenment Scots, perceived and understood when the whole process had been completed because the process happened spontaneously and was far too complicated for any individual to comprehend at once. Such an idea of spontaneous order was commonly recognised by the Scots as ‘unintended consequences’.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp, 225, 232.

⁸⁵ Mill did read Ferguson’s *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* in his college days. A. Bain, *James Mill*, p. 14.

v. The four stages theory and unintended consequences

The idea of unintended consequences was an intellectual scepticism, which suggested that society progressed in a blind manner and beyond individuals' power of noting the process, let alone interfering with it. Hume's historical understanding is essential to this intellectual scepticism. Hume argued that there was no point in blaming James II for his arrogance about kingly power, because he could not foresee the historical drama in which he was to fall victim. The limit of the human mind in perceiving the environment was evident. Thus, history could only become clear with the benefit of hindsight.⁸⁶ Hume's theory of justice was in tune with the notion of unintended consequences. Based on the assumption that human actions originated from self-love, Hume argued that justice was needed in a system 'comprehending the interests of each individual'. Accordingly, a system of justice was 'not intended for that purpose by the inventors', but as absolutely good for the public.⁸⁷ Hume used Mandevillian language to construct the theory of justice, by-passing Hutcheson's belief in the natural human capacity for benevolence.

Smith's idea of historical progress was also saturated with collectivism. Smith suggested that social progress materialised in changes of government and manners. But, at its core, the historical process relied on the motivation of human desires. Men sympathised rather more deliberately with the rich, than with the miserable. It was self-liking, not benevolence that triggered individuals to work. Human society progressed

⁸⁶ Phillipson, *Hume*, p. 82.

⁸⁷ Ronald Hamowy, *The Scottish Enlightenment and the Theory of Spontaneous Order* (Carbondale, 1987), p. 11. This is, probably, the most clear and succinct account of the Scottish idea of unintended consequences.

through different stages, but coerced by the very same blind desire.

It is this deception [imagination of being rich and powerful] which rouses and keeps in continual motion the industry of mankind. It is this which first prompted them to cultivate the ground, to build houses, to found cities and commonwealths, and to invent and improve all the sciences and arts, which ennoble and embellish human life ...⁸⁸

It is worth noting that Smith did not even presuppose that humans had been endowed with 'the seeds of improvement' as Millar, Ferguson and Stewart thought. The anti-rationalist mode of thought was most conspicuous in both Hume's and Smith's writings.

Although not in a systematic manner, Kames expressed his conviction of the limit of human rational power. In his *Historical Law Tracts*, Kames delineated the progress of jurisprudence based on the four stages theory.⁸⁹ He emphasised that historical progress was beyond human perception.

A revolution so contradictory to the strongest propensity of human nature, could not by any power, nor by any artifice, be instantaneous. It must have been gradual; and, in fact, the progressive steps tending to its completion, were slow, and, taken singly, almost imperceptible; as will appear from the following history.⁹⁰

Perhaps the most decisive proclamation of the 'blindness' of human progress was made by Ferguson.

Every step and every movement of the multitude, even in what are termed enlightened ages, are made with equal blindness to the future, and nations stumble upon establishments, which are indeed the result of human action, but not the execution of any human design. ... The reality, in the meantime, of certain establishments at Rome and at Sparta, cannot be disputed; but it is probable that the government of both these states took its rise from the situation and genius of people, not from the projects of single men; that the celebrated warrior and statesman, who are considered as the founders of those nations, only acted a superior part among numbers who were disposed to the same institution; and that they left to posterity a renown, pointing them out as the inventors of

⁸⁸ Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie (Oxford, 1976), p. 183.

⁸⁹ Kames, *Historical Law-Tracts*, pp. 89-90, 103.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 22.

many practices which had been already in use and which helped to form their own manners and genius, as well as those of their countrymen.⁹¹

In short, the Enlightenment Scots' belief in human progress was much influenced by their view of spontaneity. Thus, there was little room left for positive legislation or for social reformers to carry out any grand project.

This idea of spontaneously-generated social orders should be understood in the socio-political environment of post-Union Scotland. In an article depicting the *Angst* peculiar to Hume's generation in reflecting on their leading role in Scottish society after the '45 rebellion, Phillipson convincingly demonstrates that after the Union, many Scots of the aristocratic and gentry class formed societies and clubs devoted to social and economic improvement in Scotland. The most eminent organisation was the Honourable Society for Improvement in the Knowledge of Agriculture (HSIKA) founded in 1723. It became a quasi-assembly, in which the Scottish elite exercised similar powers to those that their ruling ancestors had done before the Union. But the second generation active after 1745 developed a moral philosophy in which human actions were 'psychologically and sociologically determined'.⁹² The pessimistic understanding of social progress undermined the active role that organised or individual pursuits could play in improving the society.⁹³

Adam Smith was an emblematic figure who reflected the generation's anxiety with the idea of unintended consequences. His conviction of 'the invisible hand' is well

⁹¹ Louis Schneider (ed.), *The Scottish Moralists on Human Nature and Society* (Chicago, 1967), pp. 109-10.

⁹² Phillipson, 'Towards a Definition of the Scottish Enlightenment', in *City and Society in the 18th Century* ed. Paul Fritz and David Williams (Toronto, 1973), pp. 125-47; p. 141.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 141-3.

known. But the most curious statement of Smith's concern with unintended consequences was, probably, not in the frequently quoted sentences in the *Wealth of Nations*, but the ones in *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Smith suggested that moral sentiments of different nations, as well as politics, aesthetics and customs, were conditioned by the minds and opinions of the nation.

In China if a lady's foot is so large as to be fit to walk upon, she is regarded as a monster of ugliness. Some of the savage nations in North-America tie four boards round the heads of their children ... Europeans are astonished at the absurd barbarity of this practice, to which some missionaries have imputed the singular stupidity of those nations among whom it prevails. But when they condemned those savages, they do not reflect that the ladies in Europe had, till within these very few years, been endeavouring, for near a century past, to squeeze the beautiful roundness of their natural shape into a square form of the same kind. ... In general, the style of manners which takes place in any nation, may commonly upon the whole be said to be that which is most suitable to its situation. Hardiness is the character most suitable to the circumstances of a savage; sensibility to those of one who lives in a very civilized society. Even here, therefore, we cannot complain that the moral sentiments of men are very grossly perverted.⁹⁴

Smith almost approached the doorway of moral or aesthetic relativism. In short, Smith's psychological determinism is a theoretical support for the idea of unintended consequences, which was, indeed, an intellectual attribute expressing, in an ingenious and subtle way, the *Zeitgeist* of the 1750s.

On the other hand, the *Edinburgh* reviewers were living in the post-French Revolution age. Many of them, particularly Henry Brougham, were involved in social and legal reforms. Though they sympathised more with Burke's *Reflections* than Paine's *Rights of Man*, students behaved in a rather radical manner toward politics, particularly in the debates of the Speculative Society. Horner regarded Dugald Stewart as displaying an 'excessive timidity on the subject of political innovation'.⁹⁵ Humean scepticism was,

⁹⁴ Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, pp. 199, 209.

⁹⁵ Searl Davis, 'Scottish Philosophical History Hume to James Mill', p. 227.

to some extent, replaced by Reid's Common Sense philosophy, partly through Stewart's curriculum in Edinburgh. It is true that, as with the literati active in 1750s, the students had no para-parliamentary activities as the Scottish aristocratic class has done in the HSIKA. However, they had the journal. The *Edinburgh Review* was, indeed, probably the most powerful extra-parliamentary organ in Britain in the early nineteenth century for shaping public opinion. Certainly, the philosophical radicals tended to shake off all the implications of unintended consequences, while the philosophical Whigs did not. The philosophical Whigs accepted the Humean thesis that opinion was the cornerstone of politics. On the other hand, the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were an age of Revolution, Napoleonic wars, the Evangelical revival, the anti-slavery movement, economic depressions, famine and other examples of political and social turmoil. Hume's epistemological scepticism and social reform pessimism, in fact, went hand-in-hand with his optimism for his own age. Hume observed that priestly authority and ideas about divine right power were now only the objects of ridicule. But in the late eighteenth century, the Whigs and radicals witnessed a revival of kingly patronage and interference. Popular loyalty increased. Under the circumstances, society would not allow too much time and space for the idea of unintended consequences. Predictably, in the age when politics and things fluctuated rapidly, people believed that historical changes were not only perceptible, but 'visible' as Cockburn recalled at the turn of the nineteenth century.

The change from ancient to modern manners, which is now completed, had begun some years before this, and was in this period in rapid and visible progress. The feelings and habits which had prevailed at the union, and had left so many picturesque peculiarities on the Scotch character, could not survive the enlarged intercourse with England and the world. ... It was the rise of the new town that obliterated our old peculiarities with the greatest rapidity and effect. It not only changed our scenes and habits of life, but, by the mere inundation of modern population, broke up and, as was then thought, vulgarized

our prescriptive gentilities.⁹⁶

The idea of unintended consequences could not produce a positive reform project, because the mid-eighteenth century did not desperately need it. But the idea of unintended consequences did not necessarily imply a resignation to precarious conditions. Sympathy and tolerance did not mean indifference. Robertson, like Burke, appeared to defend the Indians' natural rights, when the empire was thought to be in danger of corruption. Smith criticised Spanish and British colonial policies in America and India respectively because they caused the decay of the economies in those countries.⁹⁷ James Mill belonged to a generation which yearned for reforms and believed that individual exertion could bring ideas into practice, and society into betterment. With an optimistic and impatient spirit of reform, Mill hoped to see British India progress speedily.

⁹⁶ Henry Cockburn, *Memorials of his Time* (Edinburgh, 1856), pp. 28-9.

⁹⁷ Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. R. H. Campbell *et al.* (Oxford, 1976), ii, 626-7. The following discussions are from this edition, unless otherwise noted.

CHAPTER 2

THE SCOTS' VIEW OF ASIAN CIVILISATION

i. Politics, manners and economy: from Montesquieu to Adam Smith

Persian Sufis, Chinese sages, Hume's and Gibbon's appreciation of the Confucian family, and Voltaire's *chinoiserie* are impressions that modern students acquire of the eighteenth-century's attitudes towards Asia.¹ Those favourable impressions of Asia were created by the *philosophes*' attention to Asian high culture such as literature, the classics and the fine arts. There was a separate, but by no means less popular tradition of viewing Asia in the Scottish Enlightenment. Preoccupied with the stadial theory, many Scots, such as Smith, Kames, Robertson, Ferguson, John Logan and other philosophical historians in the eighteenth century discussed Asia in sociological or anthropological terms. They were less concerned with high culture, the classics or written texts than with social structure, manners, gender relations, fatherly powers, religion and economy. In one way or another, these Scots followed or reacted to Montesquieu's ideas about Asia, so eloquently but inconsistently expressed in the *Spirit of Laws*.

Montesquieu advanced a cluster of ideas about civilisation for the Scots to digest. First of all, it is well known that Montesquieu's theory of civilisation was created on the cornerstone of physical determinism. He regarded climate as the fundamental cause of national character and the corresponding social institutions. Asia was located in the hot

¹ Hume, *Essays*, pp. 78, 122, 204, 447 and *passim*. Edmund Gibbon, *Autobiography* (London, 1930), p. 31. Carl Becker, *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Philosophy* (New Haven, 1932), p. 108.

and fertile lands, which gave rise to great populations and a luxuriant, relaxing and indolent lifestyle. Moreover, following Aristotle's typology of governments, Montesquieu distinguished three types of sovereignty as the despotic, the republican and the monarchical. He believed that despotism was prevalent in the East, and cited as instances the Persians, Turks, Moguls, Japanese and Chinese. What was new in Montesquieu's sociology was that he painstakingly integrated newly acquired overseas information into the Aristotelian typology. According to Montesquieu's definition, 'the nature of despotic government is that one alone governs according to his wills and caprices.'² 'While the principle of despotic government is fear, its end is tranquillity; but this is not a peace, it is the silence of the towns that the enemy is ready to occupy.'³ Lawless or religious texts replacing civil codes were the natural development of the despotic state.

Though despotic government in its nature is everywhere the same, yet circumstances, a religious opinion, a prejudice, received examples, a turn of mind, manners, mores, can leave considerable differences among them.

It is well for certain ideas to be established in them. Thus in China, the prince is regarded as the father of the people, and, at the beginning of the empire of the Arabs, the prince was their preacher.

It is suitable for there to be some sacred book that acts as a rule, like the Koran for the Arabs, the books of Zoroaster for the Persians, the Veda for the Indians, the classics for the Chinese. The religious code replaces the civil code and fixes what is arbitrary.⁴

In Montesquieu's mind, Oriental despotism and its blistering climate went hand-in-hand in shaping the features of Asian institutions and manners. Social stagnation, polygamy, excessive population and female slavery, among many others, were said to be corollaries

² Charles de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws*, tr. and ed. Anne M. Cohler *et al.* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 21.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 211.

or concomitants of despotism. 'This is why laws, mores, and manners, even those that seem not to matter, like the fashion in clothing, remain in the East today as they were a thousand years ago.'⁵ 'The climate of China is such that it prodigiously favors the reproduction of mankind. Women there have such great fertility that nothing like it is seen elsewhere on earth. The cruellest tyranny cannot check the progress of propagation'.⁶ 'In Japan almost all crimes are punished by death because disobedience to such a great emperor as Japan's is an enormous crime.'⁷

In the various states of the East, the mores are purer as the enclosure of women is stricter. In large states, there are necessarily great lords. The greater their means, the more they are in a position to keep women in a strict enclosure and prevent them from returning to society. This is why women have such admirable mores in the empires of the Turks, Persians, Moguls, China and Japan.⁸

In short, Montesquieu's concept of Asia was centred on heat, fertility, despotism, female slavery and industriousness. No matter how much like clichés they sound to modern readers, these impressions of Asian social politics, economy and manners exerted a tremendous impact on many European writers of Asia when first written.

It is notable, however, that while the Scots literati accepted many of Montesquieu's ideas and idioms, they rejected his physical determinism. The most powerful critique of physical determinism came from Hume. Hume suggested that national characters were products of government and culture. Moreover, the human mind was more affected by the cultural environment than by the physical one: 'the climate may affect the grosser and more bodily organs of our frame, not that it can work upon those finer organs, on

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 235.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 127-8.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 271.

which the operations of the mind and understanding depend.’⁹ Hume’s critique of Montesquieu’s determinism was absolutely crucial for the Scottish tradition of moral philosophy, because it affirmed that government and social morality were subject to change. Smith’s and Millar’s history of jurisprudence were based on Hume’s moral philosophy, rather than Montesquieu’s determinism: laws would be changed in accordance with changes in the means of subsistence and property ownership. On the other hand, Humean anti-environmentalism did not actually triumph. Many Scots literati, such as Kames and Millar, still regarded climate as a useful variable in explaining the history of manners, particularly with reference to Asian manners. For instance, Millar confidently asserted his anti-environmentalism: ‘The different manners of people in the same country, at different periods, are no less remarkable, and afford evidence yet more satisfactory, that national character depends very little upon the immediate operation of climate.’ But that was not the whole story.

The voluptuousness of the Eastern nations, arising from a degree of advancement in the arts, joined, perhaps, to the effect of their climate, and the facility with which they are able to procure subsistence, had introduced the practice of polygamy; by which the women are reduced into a state of slavery and confinement, and a great proportion of the inhabitants are employed in such offices as render them incapable of contributing, either to the population, or to the useful improvements of the country.’¹⁰

As will be seen, James Mill followed exactly Millar’s version of Montesquieu’s discourses on Asian civilisation, which was to reconcile physical determinism with Scottish moral philosophy.

In this Scottish tradition of investigating the social progress of Asia, Adam Smith

⁹ Hume, ‘Of National Characters’, *Essay*, p. 215. Hume developed his theory of mind against physical determinism early in his *Treatise of Human Nature*.

¹⁰ Millar, *The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, pp. 11, 102.

was a crucial figure. His discussions of the general progress of government, economy and manners of human societies frequently referred to Asia. In the *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, Smith followed many of Montesquieu's ideas on Asian societies, excluding his physical determinism. He agreed with Montesquieu that Asian sovereignty was despotic. In the classical idea of liberty, despotism meant that the emperor was the sole proprietor of lands. Thus, there were no middling ranks between the emperor and his subjects. Also, Smith agreed with Montesquieu on the point that Asian women's social status was low as the fatherly power was only slightly limited. Smith believed that despotic government encouraged polygamy and the debased practice of infanticide. On the other hand, Smith, in the *Wealth of Nations*, agreed that Asia, i.e. China, India and Japan, was a rich continent. Smith laid out the three languages of Asian societies for Scottish philosophical historians. It is worth noting, however, that Smith's discussions of Asian social institutions were important for the present study because many of his points were taken by John Millar. Millar had learned Smith's science of jurisprudence at Glasgow. To a great extent, his *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks* was a systematic expansion of Smith's historical jurisprudence. Furthermore, Millar transformed this teaching into a history of manners. James Mill did not know about Smith's lectures, but he knew Millar's *Ranks* very well. As far as Mill was concerned, Smith was Millar's hidden source. Millar's study of social progress within Asian societies formed a crucial part of James Mill's early impression of Asian society, as soon before Mill started writing the *History of British India*, he reviewed Millar's *Ranks* in 1806 for the *Literary Journal*.

One of the main concerns of Smith's *Lectures on Jurisprudence* was historical and

comparative jurisprudence. Smith reduced Montesquieu's three-fold typology of governments into two types - the monarchical and the republican.¹¹ On the other hand, he identified the existence of polygamy with the actual practice of despotic government in the East. In discussing justice with regard to familial authority vested in the husband, i.e. domestic law, Smith disagreed with Grotius, who suggested that as long as polygamy was based on consent by the wives, there was no injustice against them.¹² Considering that polygamy was related to religion, Smith argued that 'ancient Jewish and Oriental laws tolerated polygamy, but tho' it and voluntary divorce be not altogether contrary to justice, it must be a very bad policy where they are established or allowed'.¹³ Like Montesquieu, Smith argued that the apparent tranquillity in Asian seraglios was in fact the product of 'the utmost severity' and tyranny. What most concerned Smith was that polygamy did great damage to social order. First, from the viewpoint of sociability, polygamy certainly generated jealousy and rivalry among the wives, while on the other hand, it created jealousy among the heads of families.¹⁴ The same jealousy gave rise to many sinister consequences for government, as it rendered political co-operation impossible. In feudal society, such measures damaged liberty in favour of despotism. According^{to} the reports of his students, Smith's idea of Asian polygamy and despotism was read thus:

By this means there can be no friendship or confidence in these countries betwixt the heads of families. They are by this means altogether incapacitated to enter into any

¹¹ Smith combined 'Aristocratical' and 'Democratical' governments as the 'republican'. Smith, *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, p. 404. Montesquieu seemed to agree that despotism could not be a typical or regular form of government. It was, in fact, an abnormal or corrupted form of either aristocratic or republican government. Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws*, pp. 115-7.

¹² Smith, *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, pp. 438, 442, 449 and *passim*.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 442.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 152-4.

associations or alliances to revenge themselves on their oppressors, and curb the extravagant power of the government and support their liberties. We see accordingly that all the countries where polygamy is received are under the most despotic and arbitrary government. Persia, Turkey, the Mogulls country, and China are allso.¹⁵

In addition, because the husbands had such great power in polygamous society, they also had a great power in making a decision to divorce. Deprived of liberty, the wife was also deprived of the right of succession or inheritance.¹⁶ Last, polygamy encouraged infanticide. Children were exposed to death in China where polygamy was practised.¹⁷ Smith further maintained that in early nations fathers had great power over their children, and that infanticide was extremely common in Roman history before Christianity was well established; and ‘The missionaries tell us that <it> is practised very frequently in China.’¹⁸ Despotism and its concomitants of polygamy, infanticide and female slavery were Asian peculiarities. The Orient, from Smith’s viewpoint, was rich but barbarous. Montesquieu, with physical determinism in mind, claimed that, in Asia, ‘despotism is, so to speak, naturalized’: ‘Therefore, let us not compare the morality of China with that of Europe.’¹⁹ But Smith was by no means committed to such a cultural relativism. For him, morality, human minds and government were all subject to history and historical change. In the four stages theory, ‘the civilised’ was a term meaning that a nation had reached the stage of an agricultural or commercial society. As Rendall points out, it is not altogether easy ‘to relate Smith’s history of the family to the four stages of

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 154. Rendall finds Smith’s discussion of polygamy and the condition of women to be in Pufendorf, Gershom Carmichael and Hutcheson’s tradition. Jane Rendall, ‘Virtue and Commerce: Women in the Making of Adam Smith’s Political Economy’, *Women in Western Political Philosophy: Kant to Nietzsche*, ed. Ellen Kennedy and Susan Mendus (Brighton, 1987), pp. 44-77.

¹⁶ Smith, *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, pp. 445-6.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 449.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 172-3.

¹⁹ Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws*, pp. 63, 321.

society'.²⁰ This theoretical difficulty is partly due to the fact that Smith had, indeed, two parallel frameworks on which his anthropological study of laws was based. On the one hand, Smith argued that laws evolved in relation to the mode of subsistence and the ownership of property. On the other hand, the progress of law would be influenced by religion. In other words, Smith deployed materialist and ideological analyses of the stadial theory at the same time. When society entered the stages of pastoral or commercial society, religion or government had a more decisive impact on social manners and laws than did material conditions. In short, it was difficult to accommodate the history of religion to the stadial theory of history, and particularly difficult to relate it to the explanation of non-Christian societies. Both Robertson's *Disquisition* and Mill's *History* were attempts to react to the four stages theory in Indian or Asian social contexts.

Alexander Dow (d. 1779) published *The History of Hindostan* in 1772, which contained two important essays: 'A Dissertation concerning the Origin and Nature of Despotism in Hindostan' and 'An Enquiry into the State of Bengal'. The second essay was probably an important reference for Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, for Smith's criticism of the East India Company's government in Bengal resembled that of Dow's. Dow, like Hume, did not use the four stages theory. His view of India was heavily influenced by Montesquieu's idea of climate determinism. Dow remarked that despotism was prevalent in India. 'The languor occasioned by the hot climate of India, inclines the native to indolence and ease; and he thinks the evils of despotism less severe than the labour of

²⁰ Jane Rendall, 'Virtue and Commerce: Women in the Making of Adam Smith's Political Economy', p. 64.

being free'. 'Asia, the seat of the greatest empires, has been always the nurse of the most abject slaves.'²¹ On the other hand, Islam and Hinduism were distinct in their characters:

The faith of Mahommed is peculiarly calculated for despotism; and it is one of the greatest causes which must fix for ever the duration of that species of government in the East. The legislator furnishes a proof of this position in his own conduct. He derived his success from the sword, more than from his eloquence and address. The tyranny which he established was of the most extensive kind. He enslaved the mind as well as the body. ... The unlimited power which Mahommedanism gives to every man in his own family, habituates mankind to slavery. Every child is taught, from his infancy, to look upon his father as the absolute disposer of life and death. The number of wives and concubines which more wealthy and powerful entertain, is a cause of animosity and quarrel, which nothing but a severe and unaccountable power in the master of a family can repress. The private species of despotism is, in miniature, the counterpart of what prevails in the state.²²

The organic view of despotism from the small society of the family to the great society of the state would reappear in Charles Grant and James Mill's writings, in which, nevertheless, it was Hinduism, not Islam that was thought to exert that kind of despotic power. Dow suggested that, in comparison to Islam, Hinduism was much more humane and mild.

The Hindoos, or the followers of the Brahmin faith, are in number far superior to the Mahommedans in Hindostan. ... Mild, humane, obedient, and industrious, they are of all nations on earth the most easily conquered and governed. Their government, like that of all the inhabitants of Asia, is despotic; it is, in such a manner, tempered by the virtuous principles inculcated by their religion, that it seems milder than the most limited monarchy in Europe. ... Revolution and change are things unknown; and assassinations and conspiracies never exist.²³

Like Smith, Dow considered religion as a significant variable which could either strengthen or soften despotism. More importantly, Dow was to become an important source for the nineteenth-century view of the superiority of Hindu culture to that of

²¹ Alexander Dow, *The History of Hindostan: from the death of Akbar to the complete settlement of the Empire under Aurungzebe* (London, 1772), pp. vii, ix.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. xiii-xiv.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. xxxv.

Islam. When Hindu Sepoys helped the British government to conquer 'Tippoo the Tiger' of Mysore during the Napoleonic wars, this ideology was generally accepted by the British. James Mill's *History* was a powerful reaction to this ideology.²⁴

In the language of political economy, Smith's importance lay in the fact that he seemed to invent a concept of Asia, in which Asia was a single market. Following the conventional impression of Marco Polo's fabulous Orient, Smith saw Asia as a rich continent.²⁵ Smith remarked that Egypt, India and China attained 'a high degree of opulence'.²⁶ He recapitulated the commonly assumed fact of Chinese riches and industry: 'China has been long one of the richest, that is, one of the most fertile, best cultivated, most industrious, and most populous countries in the world.'²⁷ China 'is a much richer country than any part of Europe'.²⁸ Smith's economic theory suggested that the lower the price of subsistence in a country, the richer that country was. Given this theory, Smith concluded that India and China were two of the richest countries in the world. 'China is a much richer country than any part of Europe, and the difference between the price of subsistence in China and in Europe is very great.'²⁹ In the light of

²⁴ This point will be fully discussed in chapter 4.

²⁵ The same idea is also found in his 'Early Draft of Part of WN'. 'That the cheapness of commodities in China and the Moguls empire is the necessary effect of the immense opulence of those countries, notwithstanding their great abundance of gold and silver.' Smith, *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, p. 576. This means that Smith believed it possible for an Asian country to be, at the very same time, rich, debauched and despotic. This notion of civilisation reflects strongly the prevalent impression of Eastern universal empires. A good document of this impression can be found in Ferguson, *Essay*, particularly pp. 240-1, 269 and 274-5, and Montesquieu, *Considerations on the Causes of the Greatness of the Romans and their Decline*, et al. tr. D. Lowenthal (New York, 1965), pp. 214-5.

²⁶ Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, p. 370.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 208. The emphasis is mine. Smith's argument is that the cheapness of rice, that is subsistence, gold and labour are the result of the riches of China, and any other countries.

²⁹ Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, p. 208, and 'Early Draft of Part of *The Wealth of Nations* in *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, p. 576.

this assumption, Smith considered that the East India Company had great wealth. On the other hand, Bengal was in a state of recession because the British government had bad policies, brought about by monopolies. It is crucial to note that Smith's view of Asia's wealth lay in the fact that it was a single market. Smith clearly divided the world into the three markets of Europe, America and Asia. While America was improving, Asia had already reached the highest degree of opulence that its political institutions would allow.³⁰ Smith's notion of the market was defined by the currency rate. He maintained that silver and gold had the same rate in Asia of about ten or twelve to one, while in Europe it was fifteen to one.³¹ Therefore, if America could be a vent for the redundant labour and emigrants from Britain, Asia was the best market for manufactures, namely, commerce. Asia was a rich continent because it played, in the global economy, the role of exchanging manufactures with Europe, while America could only supply agricultural products. Riches or poverty were certainly relative. Smith concluded that

the empires of China, Indostan, Japan, as well as several others in the East Indies, without having richer mines of gold or silver, were in every other respect much richer, better cultivated, and more advanced in all arts and manufactures than either Mexico or Peru, even though we should credit, what plainly deserves no credit, the exaggerated accounts of the Spanish writers, concerning the antient state of those empires. But rich and civilized nations can always exchange to a much greater value with one another, than with savages and barbarians. Europe, however, has hitherto derived much less advantage from its commerce with the East Indies, than from that with America.³²

Smith was, probably, the first philosopher to identify Asia, or Indo-China, as a single market from a sound theory. But Smith's insight also carried the view that, in his own

³⁰ Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, p. 370. The dominant feature in Asian political institutions, for Smith, is despotism which 'absorbs that of every other power in the state' and enables the government to build grand river-channels and roads. *Ibid.*, p. 729. Kames had a similar opinion of Asian despotic government in this respect. Kames, *Sketches*, ii, 274ff.

³¹ Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, pp. 224-5.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 448-9.

days, the Asian societies had become stagnant, while those of America and Europe were improving.³³

More important, the economic fluctuations of development had much to do with social institutions and government. China suffered from stagnation because its government and policy could only allow its economy to develop to a certain degree. India gained little from external commerce because its religion prohibited people from lighting fire on water.³⁴ North America could progress speedily in economic terms because most of the capital had been invested in agriculture.

The capital of all the individuals of a nation is increased in the same manner as that of a single individual, by their continually accumulating and adding to it whatever they save out of their revenue. It is likely to increase the fastest, therefore, when it is employed in the way that affords the greatest revenue to all the inhabitants of the country, as they will thus be enabled to make the greatest savings. ... It has been the principal cause of the rapid progress of our American colonies towards wealth and greatness, that almost their whole capitals have hitherto been employed in agriculture.³⁵

Government and social institutions were integral parts of economic life. Economic development was certainly subject to many sorts of influences, including education, military operations, public facilities and many others. James Mill's political economy was much more rationalistic than the *Wealth of Nations*, because it tended to be mechanistic, rather than historical. But, as will be seen, in the *History of British India*, Mill challenged Smith and Robertson's statement that Indian society was commercial but stagnant. Mill argued that India had not yet reached the state of commercial society; thus, the problem of India lay less in its stagnation or recession as many eighteenth century writers suggested, than in the fact that the Indians had not developed the political

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 98, 209, 366.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 679-82.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 366.

and economical institutions that Europeans had established. Nevertheless, Mill agreed with the Smithian perspective that the economy was an organic part of social life as a whole. As Smith's historical jurisprudence was comparative jurisprudence, Smith's political economy was a comparative study of economics. In Smith's comparative jurisprudence and economics, the image of Asia was that of a rich continent often subject to barbarous laws and customs.

This grotesque image of Asian society, being economically advanced but institutionally barbarous, was also found in Millar's *Observations* and *Origin of Ranks*. Smith's discussions of Asian religions and laws were concerned with jurisprudence in respect to liberty and property. Millar discussed Asian social institutions within the framework of stadial history, on which he depicted the history of manners. Millar argued that in the age of poverty and barbarism, 'the women of a family are usually treated as the servants or slaves of the man'.³⁶ And, Millar further maintained, when women are regarded as the servants or slaves of men, 'it is natural to expect that they should be bought and sold, like another species of property', as in Asia, Africa, and America.³⁷ With respect to patriarchal power, Millar maintained that in China, fathers had the supreme power of selling and exposing children. By contrast, '[i]n those European nations which have made the greatest improvement in commerce and manufactures, the highest liberty is usually enjoyed by the members of every family.' 'The children are no farther subjected to the father than seems necessary for their own advantage.'³⁸ On slavery, Smith had provided earlier the amoral argument for opposing slavery. Arguing

³⁶ Millar, *Observations Concerning the Distinction of Ranks in Society*, pp. 22ff.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 29. Smith used almost exactly the same words when lecturing his students on Jurisprudence.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 141, 142.

that the clergy had emancipated slaves in Europe because they wanted to increase their own popularity among the people, Smith had suggested that slaves were not needed because they worked only for themselves and, accordingly, they were 'careless about cultivating the ground to the best advantages'. Thus, Smith argued, '[o]ur colonies would be much better cultivated by freemen'.³⁹ Millar condemned slavery on moral grounds as well. Millar claimed that slavery 'is not more hurtful to the industry than the good morals of a people. To cast a man out from the privileges of society ... is to deprive him of the most powerful incitements to virtue'.⁴⁰ Millar's argument against slavery was similar to Smith's remonstrance against the enclosure of women, as persons confined or enslaved were shut out from the society.

Millar observed that though Asian nations had reached 'their opulence, and their improvement in arts', they 'are still so wonderfully tenacious of the usage [of female slavery] introduced in a barbarous period'.⁴¹ Given this conviction of the peculiar social institutions of the 'opulent' Asians, how would Millar have governed India or any other Asian country with his moral philosophy and the four stages theory? Millar suggested that the more civilised a society, the more its women enjoyed high social status. He also remarked that, in reality, the most amicable relationship between men and women was only found in western societies. Then, because this approach to the study of the social status of women's ranks was derived from Smith's lectures on Jurisprudence, Millar inevitably inherited Smith's problem with the four stages theory: should a civilised (in terms of subsistence) society practising barbarous customs (i.e. manners belonging to

³⁹ Smith, *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, pp. 453-4.

⁴⁰ Millar, *Observations Concerning the Distinction of Ranks in Society*, p. 302.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

hunting or pastoral society) be called a 'civilised' society? Francis Jeffrey, one of Millar's pupils at Glasgow, noticed the problem. In reviewing Millar's *View of the English Government*, Jeffrey remarked,

Instead of gazing, therefore, with stupid amazement, on the singular and diversified appearances of human manners and institutions, Mr Millar taught his pupils to refer them all to one simple principle, and to consider them as necessary links in the great chain which connects civilized with barbarous society. ... But though it is impossible not to be delighted with the ingenuity and happiness of the combinations by which these explanations are made out ... it must not be dissembled, that Mr Millar's confidence in its infallibility was greater than could always be justified. ... His greatest admirers must admit, that he has sometimes cut the knot which he could not untie, and disregarded difficulties which he was not prepared to overcome ...⁴²

Kames faced a similar problem. On the one hand, India and China were opulent and civilised. Kames agreed that India was fertile, its inhabitants were 'industrious, and export manufactures in great abundance at a very low price.'⁴³ Like Hume, Kames proclaimed that government shaped its subjects' manners, and that mixed or limited monarchy was the best form of government, as democracy was 'most turbulent' and despotism 'benumbs the mental faculties'.⁴⁴ Kames remarked that China was an example of limited monarchy *par excellence*. 'The Chinese government is extremely mild, and its punishments are in the same tone.'⁴⁵ 'In China, where manners are carried to a high degree of refinement, dishes are composed entirely of minced meat.'⁴⁶ On the other hand, women's status in Asian society was arguably low, as embodied in harems and the practice of polygamy.

The numerous wives and concubines in Asiatic harems, are all of them purchased with

⁴² *Edinburgh Review*, (Oct. 1803), p. 157.

⁴³ Kames, *Sketches*, i, 496.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, ii, 225-7.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 225.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 120.

money. In the hot climate of Hindostan, polygamy is universal, and men buy their wives. The same obtains in China: ... Women by the law of Hindostan are not admitted to be witnesses, even in a civil cause.⁴⁷

Kames related that wives in Hindustan and China were bought by husbands. Besides, 'In the island of Java, the bride, in token of subjection, washes the bride-groom's feet.'⁴⁸ 'The negroes purchase their wives, and turn them off when they think proper. The same law obtains in China, in Monomotapa, in the isthmus of Darien, in Caribbeana, and even in the cold country round Hudson's bay.'⁴⁹ The Persians, Indians and Chinese likewise treated their wives with jealousy and erotic secrecy. The Chinese locked their wives from their relations; ladies are shut up in a closed sedan. Hindu ladies covered themselves in veils even at home. Persian and Hindu women were confined in the seraglio.⁵⁰ By contrast, women in temperate climates, where polygamy was prohibited, were treated 'as rational beings'.⁵¹ It is evident that Kames appreciated the fact that commercial society brought about regular government and mild manners.

Finding no enjoyment but in society, they are solicitous about the good-will of others; and adhere to justice and good manners: disorderly passions are suppressed, kindly affections encouraged; and men now are better qualified for society than formerly, tho' far from being perfectly qualified.⁵²

Smith, Millar and Kames's theory of stadial history suggested that mild manners were the corollary of improvement of socio-economic conditions, which, along with the concept of ownership of property, defined the achievement of civilisation of a society.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 51, 52.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 51-5.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 77-80.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 203.

This cause-effect proposition was, as will be seen, to be rewritten by William Alexander, Francis Jeffrey and James Mill, who suggested that manners indicated the achievement of civilisation. The history of manners was, indeed, the history of civilisation. From a logician's viewpoint, if social wealth brought about sophistication of manners; then, manners could certainly indicate the state of civilisation. That is to say, Smith, Millar and Kames did not explain why the civilised India and China practised the customs of 'barbarous ages'. James Mill did not answer the question from a historical or social psychological perspective, but instead tried to re-define the stage of Indian and Chinese civilisation.

Kames probably attributed the high level of civilisation in India and China to the fact that both countries had large populations. Kames believed in the classical idea of political economy that a large population meant national wealth. He worried about luxury weakening national strength. 'Luxury is a deadly enemy to population'. 'Despotism is a greater enemy to the human species than an Egyptian plague; for by rendering men miserable, it weakens both the appetite for procreation and the power'.⁵³ The theory that a great population was to be equated with great wealth was commonly believed in the eighteenth century, and was a major reason why many Europeans were awed by the greatness of India or China. In the early nineteenth century, after Malthus's publication of *The Essay on the Principle of Population* in 1798, people started to change their views of the relationship of population and national wealth. Following Malthus's theory, James Mill questioned the importance of population to national

⁵³ *Ibid.*, i, 113, 114. This is related to Montesquieu's idea of polygamy. Smith was sympathetic with the idea. Smith, *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, p. 444.

strength and wealth. Mill remarked, 'a great population is no certain proof, either of a good government, or of high civilisation.'⁵⁴ Before the publication of Malthus's great work, political language had, however, not yet used crisis theory to interpret population. Rather, national strength was customarily seen as proportionate to the size of population.

Adam Ferguson's discussion of Asia followed Montesquieu's idea of Asian despotism and aristocratic political virtue [probably more closely than that of any other Scots. Ferguson observed that Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws* had great merit because it emphasised the important distinction 'between despotism and monarchy', which was ignored by Aristotle. Ferguson's perceptive observation resulted from his grave concern with civil liberty in the face of the increasing power of monarchy.⁵⁵ His view of Asian despotism seemed more a warning to Europeans in tune with the spirit of classical republicanism, than an actual concern with Asian politics.

Despotism is monarchy corrupted ... in which every subordinate rank is destroyed ... These doctrines are founded on the maxims of conquest; they must be inculcated with the whip and the sword; and are best received under the terror of chains and imprisonment. Fear, therefore, is the principle which qualifies the subject to occupy his station ...⁵⁶

In contrast to Hume's and Kames's admiration of the mixed monarchy of China, Ferguson thought that the Chinese government was rigid and undesirable. Ferguson reached such a judgement from the viewpoint of a classical republican. Ferguson emphatically disagreed with the common notion of '*political order*' that suggested 'an obedience, secrecy, and the silent passing of affairs through the hands of a few.' Instead,

⁵⁴ *Edinburgh Review*, (July 1809), p. 416.

⁵⁵ Ferguson, *Essay*, pp. 65-73.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

he argued that the proper order of men in society was 'their being placed where they are properly qualified to act.'⁵⁷ Ferguson agreed with Montesquieu that the tranquillity of Asian societies was undesirable, because it rested on the principle of fear, not honour or virtue. Ultimately, only mixed monarchy could accommodate an orderly civil society. 'In the disorder of corrupted societies, the scene has been frequently changed from democracy to despotism, and from the last too, in its turn, to the first.'⁵⁸ Like Montesquieu, Ferguson distrusted great or universal empires. Asian governments, such as that of China and India, were prone to be despotic because they were too big for their affairs to be understood by their subjects, or to allow perpetual participation.

When we supposed government to have bestowed a degree of tranquillity, which we sometimes hope to reap from it, as the best of its fruits, and public affairs to proceed, in the several departments of legislation and execution, with the least possible interruption to commerce and lucrative arts; such a state, like that of China, by throwing affairs into separate offices, where conduct consists in detail, and in the observance of forms, by superseding all the exertions of a great or a liberal mind, is more akin to despotism than we are apt to imagine.⁵⁹

The division of professions had its undesirable consequence in great empires or bureaucratic systems, while luxury would have its most sinister effects on an extensive empire. Being concerned with classical republicanism, Ferguson was particularly interested in political personalities. Ferguson described the Moghul emperor, Aurengzebe, as an emblematic figure of despotism. Despite the fact that Aurengzebe personified an heroic political character, 'superior to sensual pleasure', he nevertheless used the most vicious and tyrannical means in gaining power with dishonesty. Despotism gave rise to certain political actions, regardless of individual personalities or

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 268 and 268n.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 269.

abilities.

Aurengzebe was not more renowned for sobriety in his private station, and in the conduct of a supposed dissimulation, by which he aspired to sovereign power, than he continued to be, even on the throne of Indostan. Simple, abstinent, and severe in his diet, and other pleasures, he still led the life of a hermit, and occupied his time with a seemingly painful application to the affairs of a great empire. ... he aimed at the summit of human greatness, in the possession of imperial fortune, not at the gratifications of animal appetite, or the enjoyment of ease. Superior to sensual pleasure, as well as to the feelings of nature, he dethroned his father, and he murdered his brothers, that he might roll on a carriage incrustured with diamond and pearl ... As these are the objects which prompt the desire of dominion, and excite the ambitious to aim at the mastery of their fellow-creatures; so they inspire the ordinary race of men with a sense of infirmity and meanness, that prepares them to suffer indignities, and to become the property of persons, whom they consider as of a rank and a nature so much superior to their own.⁶⁰

Ferguson's notion of despotism bespoke an anti-imperialist sentiment, which was, indeed, a counter-discourse against Kames's complacent lauding of the Chinese empire. Kames suggested that, though China was a wealthy and extensive empire, its emperor Canghi (1654-1722) yearly retired to the Tartary mountains on horseback to lead the life of a hermit.⁶¹ Ferguson believed that constitutions and social institutions were more important than individual abilities or personalities. Such a pessimistic view of personal power is, indeed, Ferguson's trademark, and commonly found in his works.⁶²

In Sections III and IV of his *Essay of the History of Civil Society*, 'Of Relaxations in the National Spirit incident to Polished Nations', Ferguson praised China highly. He maintained that '[a]fter a history of some thousand years employed in manufacture and commerce, the inhabitants of China are still the most laborious and industrious of any

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 253-4.

⁶¹ Kames, *Sketches*, i. 402.

⁶² For instance, 'The growth of industry, the endeavours of men to improve their arts, to extend their commerce, to secure their possessions, and to establish their rights, are indeed the most effectual means to promote population: but they arise from a different motive; they arise from regards to interest and personal safety. They are intended for the benefit of those who exist, not to procure the increase of their numbers.' Ferguson, *Essay*, p. 140.

people on the surface of the earth.’⁶³ Moreover, the Chinese policy of keeping society in order was the most perfect model.

The state has acquired, in a measure unequalled in the history of mankind, numbers of men, and the other resources of war. They have done what we are very apt to admire; they have brought national affairs to the level of the meanest capacity ... and where the reverence of forms cannot repress disorder, a rigorous and severe police, armed with every species of corporal punishment, is applied to the purpose A mandarine is whipped, for having ordered a pickpocket to receive too few or too many blows.⁶⁴

In contrast to Montesquieu’s view of despotism and its principle of fear, Ferguson’s statement seems ironic. Montesquieu remarked that ‘I do not know how one can speak of honour among peoples who can be made to do nothing without beatings.’⁶⁵ As Ferguson was concerned with classical republicanism, this statement about universal monarchy or extensive empire must be understood satirically.

ii. Women and Asian civilisation

After the 1770s, some Scots started writing monographs on Asian societies. The reason is obvious: more valuable reports and travels were available. But, these texts on Asia emphasised the topics - despotic government, the social conditions of women and the progress of the arts and manufactures - and the language that the Scots literati had created. The most subtle and informative accounts of Asian women’s status and social existence in eighteenth-century Scotland is probably found in William Alexander’s *The History of Women*. Alexander’s work on women was deeply rooted in the Scottish

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 217.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 226.

⁶⁵ Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, p. 127.

tradition of philosophical history.⁶⁶ But the model of his work, as Rendall correctly argues, is not Smith or Millar, but Kames's *Sketches* and Ferguson's *Essay of the History of Civil Society*, particularly its section on 'the History of Rude Nations'.⁶⁷

The importance of such a genealogy rests on the fact that Alexander did not pay attention to the gradual progress seen in the four stages theory. That is to say, though interested in the typological presentation of civilisation, Alexander, like Ferguson, was not interested in the 'state of nature' or the original condition of human society.⁶⁸ Neither was he interested in any form of materialist explanation of manners. Unlike Millar's description of the history of manners in the various stages of history, Alexander's *History of Women* was an attempt at defining civilisation in terms of manners, and in his case, the status of women. Unlike Smith, Millar and Kames' hard core materialist interpretation of the history of manners, in which manners were consequences of modes of subsistence and conceptions of property, Alexander went as far as to hold women's ranks in society as the ultimate criterion of civilisation.

Hence, whenever we find a people treating their women with propriety, we may, without any further knowledge of their history, conclude that their minds are not uncultivated. When we find them cultivated, we may conclude, that they treat their women with propriety.⁶⁹

Interestingly, Alexander did not follow Smith and Millar's materialist interpretation of the history of manners, and he refused, as well, to admit that savage society was as

⁶⁶ Rendall, 'Introduction' to William Alexander's *The History of Women* (Bristol, 1995), pp. v-xxv.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. ix ff. It is notable that Kames' *Historical Law Tracts* was composed unequivocally in the framework of the four stages theory. Thus, Alexander's work does not belong to this part of Kames' literary tradition.

⁶⁸ Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*, ii, 333.

⁶⁹ Alexander, *History of Women*, i, 181.

capable of tenderness in treating their women as Kames or Millar thought was characteristic of Ossianic society. He did so for the same reason, since the fact that Indian women had low social status proved the wretchedness of that society. In the early nineteenth century, more and more writers, including James Mill, started to consider civilisation in this fashion, taking manners or cultural creativity as the criteria of the position on the scale of civilisation. Alexander followed Ferguson in dividing civilisations into three categories. Ferguson identified three types of societies according to the 'allocation of property and labour': the savage or the rude society, the barbarous, and the polished or civilised.⁷⁰ Likewise, Alexander divided civilisation into three categories: the Africans and Amerindians, the Asians and the Europeans.⁷¹ According to Alexander, women's education and social status were most evident in Europe, and least in savage society, i.e. in Afro-American societies, while Asia was in the middle position. Similarly, Asian women's social prospects fell behind their counterparts in Europe. Alexander generally used the names of continents to denote the 'stages' of civilisation. Each continent was described as 'savage', 'barbarous', or 'polished' according to women's social existence.

Like Ferguson, Alexander based much of his history on Montesquieu's sociology and typology. He contrasted the three types of societies throughout his work. The women were treated in each stage according to the material conditions of their society:

That propriety of female behaviour, which inclines the men to favour, and treat the sex with the greatest indulgence, is of various kinds, and would be tedious to run over. In savage countries, it consists mostly in performing the tasks of labour assigned them; in yielding the most abject submission to their husbands In the East, it consists in resigning themselves with a seeming alacrity to confinement; being perfectly skilled in

⁷⁰ O'Brien, *Narratives of Enlightenment*, p. 134.

⁷¹ Alexander, *History of Women*, i, 90, 257, 283, and *passim*.

all the arts of pleasing, and avoiding, with the utmost circumspection, every cause of jealousy. In Europe it is more unlimited; it consisted in good-nature, sensibility, delicacy, chastity, the domestic virtues, and a thousand other qualities ...⁷²

Montesquieu remarked that '[i]n despotic states women do not introduce luxury, but they are themselves an object of luxury'.⁷³ Alexander also observed that '[i]n the East, where women are exempted from labour; not because they are esteemed and regarded, but because it would render them less delicate instruments of voluptuous pleasure'. For this pleasure, Asian women were 'confined to seraglios and harems'.⁷⁴ Alexander's discussion of Asian women and the history of manners, did not link closely to the history of jurisprudence, in which Smith and Millar were interested. His discussion, instead, reinforced Montesquieu's thesis of Asian despotism and the eighteenth century's belief in Asian riches. It seemed that Alexander expanded the early modern British ideological problem of luxury from political debates to the field of geo-cultural investigations. Alexander went so far as to remark that '[i]n every despotic state, slavery is a chain: the prince at the head of it oppresses his courtiers, they oppress the inferior officers, the inferior officers oppress the whole of the subjects, and every subject oppresses the women.'⁷⁵ Such an organic view of despotism was later recurrent in the works of Charles Grant and James Mill.

Alexander further subdivided Asian nations into three categories: Muslim countries, Hindu society and China with Japan. He asserted that in several warmer regions of Asia and Africa, women are treated 'merely as instruments of animal pleasure, the little

⁷² *Ibid.*, 330-1.

⁷³ Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, p. 104.

⁷⁴ Alexander, *History of Women*, i, 90.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 261.

education bestowed upon them, is entirely calculated to give additional charms to their persons and debauch their minds.' But women of 'Hindustan' were more decently educated.⁷⁶ Moreover, the women in China 'seem to enjoy the rank, tend to share in the honours and dignities of their husbands.' The queens in Siam and women of the *Deyario* in Japan were also treated with veneration.⁷⁷ Alexander insisted that such a geo-cultural typology of societies was legitimate. He employed Dunbar's theory of geographical relation in shaping a recognisable homogeneous type of society.

Geographical relation, therefore, will always be, in some degree, instrumental in retarding or accelerating, in every country, the progress of civil life. ... Civility and rudeness being distributed like light and darkness in the natural world, contiguous nations are often contemporary in their progress and decline.⁷⁸

The idea of Asia or of Asian civilisation was supported by this idea of geographical proximity. The vast land to the east of the Mediterranean was called Asia and Asian civilisation which, for Alexander, was in the middle rank of civilisation compared with the American and African on the one hand, and the European on the other. In the four stage theory, 'the civilised' meant the agricultural and commercial societies. In Alexander's account of women's history, the degree of being civilised was comparative. He described Asian or Muslim countries as 'half civilized people'. The notion of 'half civilised' could not be possible in the four stages theory, for each type of society was clearly and distinctly defined by the external criterion of the mode of subsistence. It could be understood only by comparing societies. While one of the societies was taken as the standard of civilisation, the farthest end of this range of civilisation was the

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 74-5.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 295-6.

⁷⁸ James Dunbar, *Essays on the History of Mankind* (reprinted from 1791 edn., Bristol, 1995), p. 318.

savage. The middle of this spectrum of civilisational progress could be described as the half-civilised or half-barbarous. They were two names for the same thing.⁷⁹ Such a comparison was not merely expedient or playful. It was needed to the extent that the four stages theory failed to explain properly why some countries, such as China and the East Indies, which had had agricultural and manufacturing societies for centuries, continued to practise barbarous customs in respect to women. For Alexander, women's rights were a measure of the state of civilisation. This Alexanderian view of civilisation was echoed in Mill's *History of British India*. Mill maintained that '[t]he history of uncultivated nations uniformly represents the women as in a state of abject slavery, from which they slowly emerge, as civilisation advances.'⁸⁰ Mill complained that women's situation in Asia was one of enslavement. 'Women were treated as an inferior race by Asiatic nations', and, Mill remarked, 'treated by husbands not as very different from slavery.'⁸¹

In addition, Alexander described women's confinement in Asia. He implied that the practice showed the degree of civilisation in Asian society: in the middle between the savage and the highly civilised.

Though politeness teaches us to consider the confinement of women as an unlawful exertion of superior power, ... yet we find it practised almost all over Asia, Africa and even in some parts of Europe. But what seems rather extraordinary, is, wherever it takes place, it affords a demonstrative proof, that the inhabitants are arrived some degrees farther in civilization than mere savages, who have hardly any love, and, consequently, as little jealousy ...⁸²

Likewise, Mill admitted some degree of civilisation among the Indians. 'They have some

⁷⁹ Alexander, *History of Women*, i, 276.

⁸⁰ Mill, *History*, i, 309.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 311.

⁸² Alexander, *History of Women*, i, 284.

general precepts, recommending indulgence and humanity in favour of the weaker sex.’⁸³ However, Mill remarked that, though the Indians have surpassed savages who treat women with ‘pure violence and appetite’, Indian society was not rational enough to enact laws to protect all of their women, or affluent enough to seclude all their women from the public eyes.⁸⁴

John Adams’s *Curious Thoughts on the History of Man* (1789) reproduced many of the points that Montesquieu and some Scottish writers had discussed, and these were pertinent to women’s slavery and social conditions in Asia. John Adams (1750?-1814) was a native of Aberdeen and a graduate of the University. He later went to London serving as a minister in the Scotch church in Hatton Garden. His work is a compilation of the previous accounts written by Montesquieu and some Scottish philosophical historians, such as Kames. The most absorbing discussion in Adams’s work with respect to the present study is that of love. From chapter twenty-eight onwards, Adams discussed love in general. In chapter thirty-three, he talked about ‘love in a republic’, in chapter thirty-four, ‘love of the Orientals’, in chapter thirty-five, ‘of love in monarchies’. In chapter thirty-seven, he discussed ‘the necessity and happiness of matrimony’. In thirty-eight, he talked about polygamy, in thirty-nine, ‘the education of Asiatic women’.⁸⁵ The train of Adams’ ideas of civilisation is curious. The ‘Orientals’ are juxtaposed with ‘a republic’ and ‘monarchies’, as if the Orient was the personification of despotism. Adams quickly linked the conception of love in a society to its political ideology, as he believed,

⁸³ Mill, *History of British India*, i, 316

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 318.

⁸⁵ John Adams, *Curious Thoughts on the History of Man* (reprinted from 1789 edn., Bristol, 1995), pp. 96-124.

in Humean vein, that '[t]he form of government generally determines the manners of a people.' Adams asserted that in 'a republic', love will 'preserve its natural simplicity; and marriages will be the more secure'.⁸⁶ To the Orientals, 'a wife is only the slave of her husband ... Jealousy, the natural consequence of that slavery, banishes the women from society'.⁸⁷ In contrast, women in monarchies 'will give into intrigue, and will have a great influence in affairs.' In the Renaissance humanist sense of gender politics, the political influence coming from the female quarter would enable women to 'beget a romance idea of love. Great sentiments will be held in honour'. A great concern of love in monarchies, for Adams, as for Ferguson and many other Scots, was that '[i]f luxury gets possession of a nation, the sublime idea of love will vanish'.⁸⁸ Having discussed the love to which 'the Creator attaches the propagation of the species', Adams moved to discuss matrimony, which 'is so necessary to the human race, that it must be an appointment of Heaven'.⁸⁹ Adams observed, '[i]n the hot climate of Hindostan polygamy is universal, and men buy their wives. The same obtains in China.'⁹⁰ And polygamy was a 'gross infringement of the law of nature', the result of an ignorance of Providence.⁹¹

Recapitulating what his predecessors had written, Adams hardly provided any new information about Asian customs and civilisation for his contemporaries. But Adams' arrangement, or re-arrangement, of the existing information was eye-catching to the

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 102-3.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 105-6.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 96, 110.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 120-1.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

extent that readers could easily receive a deliberately designed image of Asian societies: the personification of despotism and its consequential impact on the institutions or manners of love, marriage and politics. From the viewpoint of natural laws and Providence, the Asians had behavioural irregularity, moral aberration and legal injustice, with regard to love and marriage. Adams was a publicist and his works had ‘voluminous reprints’, thus, his summaries and his comparatively well organised opinions about Asian societies should be regarded as no less important as the works of the more able Scots literati.⁹²

John Logan was, probably, more renowned as a poet than as a speculative historian in his own day. He was another minor Scottish writer who was certainly responsible for creating civilisational idioms. Hugh Blair and Ferguson both appreciated Logan’s talent, when he attended their classes at the University. Logan was later disappointed that William Robertson did not support his candidacy for the chair of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh. Through support of Blair, Ferguson and Adam Smith, however, Logan was able to deliver a course of private lectures on the philosophy of history from 1779 to 1781.⁹³ In 1781, Logan published *Elements of the Philosophy of History*, an outline of his lectures. The *Elements* drew heavily on Ferguson’s tri-stadial theory, Montesquieu’s physical determinism and the idea of despotism. It is interesting that Logan saw Asian despotism as the master principle of Asian civilisation which explained the character of its institutions. Ferguson had shown the gravity of despotism in Asian government. The difference between Logan’s and Ferguson’s understanding of despotism was that Logan

⁹² Alice E. Jacoby, Introduction to John Adams’s *Curious Thoughts on the History of Man*, p. xiv.

⁹³ Richard Sher, ‘Introduction’ to John Logan’s *Elements of the Philosophy of History* (reprinted from 1787 edn., Bristol, 1995), pp. vi-vii.

stripped away Ferguson's classical republican language. In other words, Logan's discourse on Asian politics was less self-reflexive than Ferguson's. Logan stated at the head of his lecture that he would explore one form of government that

hath prevailed in Asia from the earliest records of history to the present time. A despot possessed supreme and unlimited authority. The legislative, judicative, and executive powers are vested in his person. ... The Arts of Asia partake the spirit of despotism. An unwieldy and encumbered magnificence prevails in every thing. ... The Causes Physical and Moral which produce this uniform appearance, and establish the Asiatic Government, Character and Spirit, upon everlasting foundations.⁹⁴

In 1787, William Creech published Logan's *A Dissertation on the Governments, Manners, and Spirit of Asia*. It was a part of Logan's lectures at Edinburgh based on notes taken by Creech himself. The publication took place on the day that the House of Commons debated Warren Hastings' impeachment on the charge that he had behaved like an Asian despot. Logan in the first place addressed the high antiquity of Asian nations, including 'the empires of Assyria, Babylon, Persia, China, and Indostan'. But, this antiquity, for Logan, implied immutability and disapproval, rather than a Gibbonian admiration of the long tradition of Confucius' family.

Here, according to universal history, the human species first united in civilised society ... Laws and policy were instituted, agriculture and manufactures were carried on, arts and sciences were cultivated ... Asia was the seat of empire, of arts and of luxury, while Europe was one forest ... An air of antiquity, stability, duration, is imprinted on these elevated regions. The form of Asia, like its manners and customs, appears immutable.⁹⁵

Besides, the 'Great King' possessed unlimited power 'which is not only arbitrary but

⁹⁴ John Logan, *Elements of the Philosophy of History*, pp. 26-8.

⁹⁵ John Logan, *A Dissertation on the Governments, Manners, and Spirit of Asia* (reprinted from 1787 edn., Bristol, 1995), pp. 7, 9. Of course, the praise of the archaic civilisation of Asia was but a stock-trade in European discourses of the Continent. Dunbar expressed that 'if the honours of nations were, in reality, to be estimated by riches, by populations, by the antiquity of arts, or by the stability and duration of civil government, it is not any of the European nations, it is the Chinese, and the Indians, who must be placed at the head of the species'. James Dunbar, *Essays on the History of Mankind*, pp. 196-7.

absolute'. 'Public spirit, liberty, independence, the rights of mankind, are names that have never been pronounced in the region of Asia'.⁹⁶ Also, 'despotic power and domestic slavery always walk hand in hand. The father of a family is a despot'.⁹⁷ Like Alexander, Logan viewed Asian despotism as an organism, from which all social institutions generated a despotic nature. It is notable that Logan believed that Asian religion helped to strengthen despotic government.

A monarch without glory, the great without ambition ... Hence voluptuousness is the passion of Asia ... The arts of Asia partake the spirit of despotism ... Greatness without beauty; ornament without art; luxury without refinement; genius without taste, characterise the spirit of the East. ... The mountains of Europe are the barriers of liberty; the plains of Asia form the seat of despotism. The extreme fertility of this continent is no less favourable to despotic government ... the religion of Asia has always been the great support of absolute government ... a kind of theocracy has taken place. ⁹⁸

Logan's idea of 'theocracy' was the Montesquieu's thesis that in Asia, religious doctrines replaced laws: priests were legislators.

iii. William Robertson, William Jones and Asian civilisation in the language of Political Economy

William Robertson published *An Historical Disquisition concerning the Knowledge which the Ancients had of India* in 1791. As Carnall points out, the context in which Robertson composed his *Disquisition* was the impeachment of Warren Hastings begun in 1788.⁹⁹ More specifically, one of the main points of this work was to counteract

⁹⁶ Logan, *ibid.*, pp. 10, 12.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.16, 17, 20-1, 22-3.

⁹⁹ Geoffrey Carnall, 'Robertson and contemporary images of India', in *William Robertson and the Expansion of Empire*, ed. S. J. Brown (Cambridge, 1997), p. 212. For an detailed discussion of the impeachment, see P. J. Marshall, *The Impeachment of Warren Hastings* (Cambridge, 1965). For interpretations of the historic event and its consequences, see *The Impeachment of Warren Hastings*, ed.

Logan's representation of Indian or Asian societies. In discussing Indian religions and government, Robertson suggested that Asian government was not despotism in the classical definition of the term, because Asian societies knew about the alienation of property and inheritance rights. The king was the sole proprietor of lands only in the nominal, not the actual sense. Moreover, Asian religion, particularly Hinduism, was the most powerful check against kingly power. In short, Asian government was not a theocracy as Logan assumed. It is crucial to note that the difference between Logan's and Robertson's interpretations of Asian religion and government resulted from their different interpretations of William Jones's words. William Jones (1746-1794) was a gentleman scholar, linguist and later a judge of the Supreme Court in Calcutta. In his famous Preface to the *Institutes of Hindu Law; or the Ordinances of Menu*, a translation work commissioned by Warren Hastings, Jones offered a rather curious comment on Hinduism and government:

[The Menu is] with many beauties, which need not be pointed out, and with many blemishes, which cannot be justified or palliated. It is a system of despotism and priestcraft, both indeed limited by law, but artfully conspiring to give mutual support, though with mutual checks; it is filled with strange conceits in metaphysics and natural philosophy, with idle superstitions ... ¹⁰⁰ [emphasis added]

Logan leaned much on the part of 'artfully conspiring to give mutual support', while Robertson relied on that of 'mutual checks'.

Robertson tried to discern the spirit of Indian laws and political constitutions and concluded that Indian society was not as despotic and degraded as many Europeans thought. He maintained that the political constitution and 'the spirit of laws' were the

G. Carnall and C. Nicholson (Edinburgh, 1989).

¹⁰⁰ *The Works of Sir William Jones*, (6 vols., London, 1800), iii, 62.

two major objects in 'estimating the progress which any nation has made in civilization'.¹⁰¹ He identified Eastern government as despotic when it was defined by three qualities. First, the sovereign possessed 'the absolute command of a vast military force' and disposal of revenue. Second, the people shared no part in legislation. Third, there was no middle rank between the people and the prince.¹⁰² On the other hand, Robertson argued that despotism did not mean that the monarch in question 'continually exerted in acts of violence, injustice, and cruelty.' He assumed that the absolute power of eastern princes was 'accidentally circumscribed' by the principles of religion. There was a principle of justice on which despotic administration was based.¹⁰³ In the *Disquisition*, Robertson further employed the thesis that Asian despotic power was circumscribed by religion in the specific setting of Indian society. Robertson argued that Indian sovereigns were 'far from possessing uncontrouled or despotic power ... It was to different principles that the natives of India were indebted for restrictions which limited the exercise of regal power.'¹⁰⁴ Robertson remarked that the true ruling class in India was the Kshatriya, warriors and civil administrators. Their powers were curbed by the hereditary families of the Brahmins, who

came gradually to form an intermediate order between the sovereign and his subjects; and, by the vigilant jealousy with which they maintained their own dignity and privileges, they constrained their rulers to respect them, and to govern with moderation

¹⁰¹ Robertson, *Disquisition*, p. 247. In 'A View of the Progress of Society in Europe', Robertson expressed a similar idea: 'Without a distinct knowledge of the peculiar form and genius of civil government in each state, a great part of its transactions must appear altogether mysterious and inexplicable'. See *The Works of William Robertson* (London, 1824), iv, 176.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 325-6.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 178, 325.

¹⁰⁴ Robertson, *Disquisition*, pp. 238-9.

and equity.¹⁰⁵

By contrast to Logan's account of Asian theocracy, Robertson tried to identify the Brahman as checking the powers of the Kshatriya. Logan suggested that the agents or executors of Asian theocracy were 'Brimha, Brahman, the legislator of the Hindoos or Gentoos, Magi of Persia, Osiris and Bacchus in India, Mohammed and Califfs, Xeriffs and Imans in Arabia, the Grand Lama of Tartary.'¹⁰⁶ With regard to India, Logan's statement was based on the conventional idea of the ranking of the caste system, in which the Brahman was the first class. Robertson provided an unconventional interpretive reading of Indian government. He argued that in terms of the actual power relationship between the governing and the governed, the Brahman was neither the first class, nor the class holding the real power of government. Instead, the Brahmin class was 'an intermediate order' between the second rank and the third and fourth ranks of people.

In addition, in tackling the classical idea of despotism that the king was the sole proprietor of lands, Robertson attempted to provide his individual explanation. Partly to support Warren Hastings' rural administration in Bengal, William Jones was asked to find out whether traditional Hindu laws or the Moghul empire allowed lands to be alienated. In order to increase income, Hastings planned to auction lands to the highest bidders and collect revenues from the landowners.¹⁰⁷ Jones found legal support for the policy. He challenged the commonly shared notion that the Muslim king was the sole proprietor of the land. He argued that this notion could not be true, for

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

¹⁰⁷ Ranajit Guha, *A Rule of Property for Bengal: An Essay on the Idea of Permanent Settlement* (Durham, 1996), p. 7.

nothing can be more certain, than that *land, rents, and goods* are, in the language of all *Mahommedan lawyers, property alike alienable and inheritable.*¹⁰⁸

Robertson's understanding of this aspect of Indian society was not as straightforward as Jones', but was certainly more positive than Logan's. Robertson agreed that, in India, the sovereign was, *de jure*, the sole proprietor of all the land, but *de facto*, '[a]s long as the husbandman continues to pay the established rent, he retained possession of the farm, which descended, like property, from father to son.'¹⁰⁹

Furthermore, Robertson explained the features of the Indian caste system with a synthesis of the division of professions and Physiocratic ideology. For many *philosophes*, Asia, particularly China, was a happy country because its kings were very much concerned with agriculture. Robertson thought that the system had been invented because the Indians knew that 'the various professions and arts [are] necessary in a well-ordered society, and appointed the exercise of them to be transmitted from father to son in succession.'¹¹⁰ Also, because of the existence of the third class, Vaisya, which was dedicated to agriculture, the government was considered by Robertson as one that paid particular attention to cultivators and the Indians were thought of as 'a most happy race of men'.¹¹¹ This sympathetic Robertsonian history of Indian society had an impact on John Adams, who composed *A View of Universal History* in 1795. As has been mentioned, Adams adopted many of Montesquieu's critiques of Asian societies in his *Curious Thoughts on the History of Man*. In his new work Adams drew heavily on Robertson's study, and admitted a favourable picture of Indian society.

¹⁰⁸ *The Works of Sir William Jones*, iii, 511.

¹⁰⁹ Robertson, *Disquisition*, p. 242.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 241, 244.

The manners of the Hindoo are gentle. ... Their religion also permits them to have several wives; but they seldom have more than one: and it has been observed, that their wives are distinguished by a decency of demeanor, a solicitude in their families, and a fidelity to their vows, which might do honour to human nature in the most civilized countries. The custom of women burning themselves, upon the death of their husbands, is still practising among some of high condition, though much less frequently than in former times; and it is said, that the Bramins now do not encourage it.

The inhabitants of this country are remarkably honest and humane. There is scarcely an instance of a robbery in all Indostan, though the diamond merchants travel without a defensive weapon.¹¹²

From Robertson's point of view, the existence of the caste system actually explained the absence of Oriental despotism and the existence of inheritance rights in Indian society. The Indian caste system was an indigenous way of government. Robertson's discovery seemed to assert that every society could develop its own civilisation according to its own logic. But such an idea was hardly possible in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. How then could one understand the peculiarities of social institutions and manners in the context of the four stages theory? Robertson himself was by no means a relativist about civilisation. His arguments sought to prove that Indian society was an 'enlightened and commercial' society; that it 'had attained to a very high degree of improvement, many ages before the least step towards civilization had been taken in any part of Europe.'¹¹³ Robertson also maintained that though Indian society had not yet established 'positive statutes', it had known 'customary or common law' which was the 'accumulated wisdom and experience of ages'.¹¹⁴ In terms of stages of civilisation, Indian society had reached the highest stage, that is commercial society; although it remained one step behind Europe. Therefore, Indian society differed from European society not in quality but in degree. And this was

¹¹² John Adams, *A View of Universal History* (3 vols., London, 1795), ii, 28.

¹¹³ Robertson, *Disquisition*, pp. 253, 333.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 247.

the conclusion that James Mill intended to challenge.

The four stages theory did not admit cultural relativism, but allowed for the possibility of cross-cultural understanding. Through the Appendix in the *Disquisition*, Robertson toiled to show the British that the Indians had reached high achievements of civilisation. It is hard to see why Robertson needed to do so. If Indian and Chinese societies had been 'the richest' countries in the world as Smith asserted, then they were unquestionably the truly civilised countries in the definition of the four stages theory, unless Robertson believed that the Indians had experienced the kind of decline that the Greeks and Romans had suffered. Robertson did not, however, think that Indian civilisation was in a state of decline, as some Orientalists suggested in the nineteenth century. Robertson believed, as the stadial theory suggested, that when a society moved away from the savage state and particularly when it entered into the agricultural or commercial society, social institutions and manners were naturally diversified. To understand these diversified manners, observers had to view the given society in its own conditions and from its own views. Robertson in his *Disquisition* warned his country-fellows against ethnocentric prejudice.

Men in every stage of their career are so satisfied with the progress made by the community of which they are members, that it becomes to them a standard of perfection ... with the colour of the inhabitants, their effeminate appearance, their warlike spirit, the wild extravagance of their religious tenets and ceremonies, the Indians were always viewed and treated as an inferior race of men.¹¹⁵

The different stages of society were considered by Robertson as different types of cultures. This was, so to speak, Robertsonian culturalism against racism. This culturalism not only embodied the humanist idea of being conscious of prejudice, but

¹¹⁵ Robertson, *Disquisition*, pp. 332-3.

also hinted at the possibility of an ‘historical science of culture’.¹¹⁶ To historicise indigenous culture, Robertson created a pseudo-cultural relativism reminiscent of Montesquieu’s relativisation of Chinese morality and industry. Montesquieu remarked that Chinese hard work and industriousness were the effect of the climate and government in the land, rather than their morality. ‘Therefore, let us not compare the morality of China with that of Europe.’¹¹⁷ In discussing an Indian drama, *Sacontala*, translated by William Jones, Robertson maintained,

In estimating its merit, however, we must not apply to it rules of criticism drawn from the literature and taste of nations with which its author was altogether unacquainted; ... we must not measure it by our own standard of propriety. Allowance must be made for local customs, and singular manners, arising from a state of domestic society, an order of civil policy, and a system of religious opinions, very different from those established in Europe.¹¹⁸

By proposing the need to view societies from their own standpoint, Robertson raised the subtle question of the relationship between the idea of progress and the four stages theory. Robertson hinted that the idea of progress did not imply that one form of society was ‘better’ than another. In agricultural or commercial societies, the diversified manners and cultural creativity should be evaluated and understood in their own terms. Robertson held that *Sacontala* was, in some places, simple and tender; in some others, it was *pathetic*. Its heroine, Sacontala, was ‘extremely agreeable to the Oriental taste.’¹¹⁹ It seemed that Robertson believed it was possible to evaluate Asian cultures by Asian standards. Nevertheless, he might be prone to slipping into a tautology that everything

¹¹⁶ J. G. A. Pocock, *Politics, Language and Time* (London, 1972), p. 102.

¹¹⁷ Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, p. 321.

¹¹⁸ Robertson, *Disquisition*, pp. 274.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 275.

Oriental was 'extremely agreeable' to the Orientals. Robertson valiantly portrayed the historical mind of the Amerindians. His tolerance for the natives was based on the assumption that the Amerindians could not understand the European religion because their social conditions and experiences did not allow them to do so and he concluded that it had been wrong for the Spaniards to try to christianise them. But did Robertson think that Oriental Indians were capable of understanding Christianity? And if they were capable of understanding Christianity, should not missionary activities be encouraged in India? Indeed, if stadial history gave Robertson an historiographical tool for observing the cultural chasm between North America and Europe, it caused him unexpected difficulty in treating India. Robertson, along with Hume and William Jones, belonged to a generation, which emphasised high culture and elite society as the representative of civilisation; but James Mill belonged ^{to} a generation, which believed that the common people should have a great part to play in civilisation. In discussing the drama of *Sacontala*, James Mill found William Jones guilty because he was too ready to believe what Brahmins said 'on the subject of a supposed ancient state of high civilization, riches and happiness among the Hindus', and ignored any evidence to the contrary.¹²⁰ The first British Ambassador to China, George Macartney, warned Europeans that it was as difficult to discover the Chinese mind in Canton harbour as to discover the English mind in Wapping.¹²¹ Likewise, for Mill and many of his generation, it was difficult to find the picture of Indian civilisation exclusively from the Vedas.

In addition to political and sociological languages, the idioms of political economy

¹²⁰ Mill, *History*, ii, 40.

¹²¹ Quoted from V. G. Kiernan, *The Lords of Human Kind*, p. 153.

pronounced a decisive tone in the Scots' discussions of Asian societies. The riches of Asia and the fertility of the East has been a time-honoured myth in English writings and travels. In Marco Polo fashion, Sir John Mandeville described Cathay: 'The kyndon of Cathay is the grettest reme of the world ... [in the Imperial court] alle hire clothes ben so noblely and so richely wrought with gold and precious stones and rich perles.'¹²² In the late sixteenth century, an English merchant in India related that in the west coast of India, Bellergan, nowadays, Belgaum, there was 'a great market kept of Diamonds, Rubies, Sapphires.'¹²³ Another reported that Pegu was 'very fruitful for all things'.¹²⁴ Agra was described as a very great city and populous. 'The King hath in Agra and Fatepore ... a thousand Elephants, thirty thousand horses ... Agra and Fatepore are two very great cities, either of them much greater than London and very populous ... [people] have many fine carts - and many of them carved and gilded with gold ... they are covered with silk or very fine cloth, and be used here as our coaches be in England'.¹²⁵

In the mid-eighteenth century, the myth of Eastern riches remained; but it was now wrapped in a new cloak appearing in the languages of colonial and political economy. Robert Clive, the first governor-general of Bengal, maintained that India 'overflowed with riches'.¹²⁶ As a colonial official, Clive's rhetoric of Indian riches followed the example of Columbus - propagating material advantages in this part of world, in order to earn more government support for explorations or colonisation.¹²⁷ In the eighteenth

¹²² *Mandeville's Travels*, ed. M. C. Seymour (Oxford, 1967), pp. 166, 168.

¹²³ J. Courtenay Locke (ed.), *The First Englishmen in India* (London, 1930), p. 99.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

¹²⁶ Quoted from Javed Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings*, p. 155.

¹²⁷ Without realising he had arrived in the Americas, Columbus described his imaginary Cathay and East Indies to the European kings. 'All these islands are extremely fertile ... All this is marvellous.' He, then,

century, this myth of Asian riches was maintained as a proof of Providence and, simultaneously, as a scientific explanation. John Adams wrote that ‘according to our sacred books’, the southern part of Asia was the place ‘where the human race begins and ‘much more delightful than Europe ... always produced finer bodies of men, and other animals, as well as better vegetables.’ In short, Asia was in the ‘fertile climate’.¹²⁸ Before his arrival in India, William Jones claimed that India was ‘the rich and celebrated empire’ which ‘has been the source of incredible wealth to the merchants of Europe’.¹²⁹ Kames believed that the Indians were living in a fertile land, were industrious and that they ‘export manufactures in great abundance at a very low price’.¹³⁰

After Smith had published his powerful study of political economy, the myth of Asian riches acquired a scientific explanation. Robertson was, probably, the first Scot who applied that Smithian language about Indo-China being an integrated market to a specific study of the subject.

But, after the passage to India by the Cape of Good Hope was discovered, its various commodities were purchased at first hand in the countries of which they were the growth of manufacture. In all these, particularly in Indostan and in China, the subsistence of man is more abundant than in any other part of the earth. ... Population, of consequence, is so great, and labour so extremely cheap, that every production of nature or of art is sold at a very low price.¹³¹

In fact, Robertson’s *Disquisition* was composed of two parts. The first part described the geographical significance of India for commerce in the Eurasian world. In providential

urged European governments to give him further support, ‘... their Highnesses can see that I will give them as much gold as they require, if they will render me some very slight assistance; also I will give them all the spices and cotton they want ...’ Christopher Columbus, *The Four Voyages of Christopher Columbus* (London, 1988), p. 122.

¹²⁸ John Adams, *Curious Thoughts of the History of Man*, p. 9.

¹²⁹ *The Works of Sir William Jones*, ii, 126.

¹³⁰ Kames, *Sketches*, i, 496.

¹³¹ Robertson, *Disquisition*, p. 200.

language, Robertson clearly claimed that his purpose in this work was to show ‘how much that great branch of commerce has contributed, in every age, to increase the wealth and power of the nations which possessed it [India].’¹³² The second part was a lengthy appendix. As has been discussed above, it discussed Indian society and its high culture. The body of the text was an embodiment of the combination of commerce and polite culture. Viewing Indo-China as a great single market was particularly suitable for the historical context, in which Robertson wrote of India. By the time Robertson published the *Disquisition*, the British had secured, in opposition to the French, a considerable part of India and had established the country as a bridgehead from which the British were to explore further afield into Asia.

But, soon after the *Disquisition* had been published, India became a vast battlefield for the Anglo-French wars. The East India Company suffered from serious deficits, both because of the Napoleonic wars and the excessive importation of Chinese tea. The Company was to enact the Permanent Settlement in order to collect sufficient revenues to cover these deficits. By so doing, the British became even further involved in government of India. In India, more conquests had to be undertaken by the British, more missionary activity was encouraged, openly or surreptitiously, and more ideological debates about administrative reforms became necessary. Robertson’s *Disquisition* dealt with classical enlightenment concerns with commerce and tolerance. Being faced with impending turbulence in the last decade of the century, the *Disquisition* was behind its time, and it failed to exercise the influence on public opinion that might have been expected.

¹³² *Ibid.*, pp. iii-iv.

iv. William Jones, Dugald Stewart and Asian civilisation

While Robertson was interested in the particularities of Indian society, William Jones was interested in the universal among the Asians. Well before his arrival at Calcutta in 1784, Jones had, in 1771, claimed that ‘Arabic and Persian languages will open a convenient gate for the Europeans to understand all major nations in Asia ... from the source of the Nile to the wall of China ...’¹³³ This statement was not merely a way of promoting his efforts to study Arabic. Following his belief in Mosaic history, Jones believed that he had evidence that humans had originated from a common place in Asia. In his famous first Presidential Speech to the Asiatick Society at Calcutta (itself founded in 1784), Jones poetically recalled the Asia that he imaginatively saw from the deck when sailing for India in that year: ‘*India* lay before us, and *Persia* on our left, whilst a breeze from *Arabia* blew nearly on our stern.’¹³⁴ Again, this imaginary description expressed Jones’s obsession with the geo-cultural affinity among the Asians. Because Jones was engrossed with Mosaic history and with the universality of all cultures, he suggested that ‘Asiatick is a word better to name the society than that of Oriental, for the latter word bears no distinct idea.’¹³⁵ Asia was the name given in the Old Testament, indicating genealogy, or the ethnic origin of humans and cultures, while the Orient meant little more than a geographical region. Accordingly, Jones was, more than most of his contemporaries, sensitive about the similarity and connections among Asian societies and cultures. The Jesuits suggested that the Chinese believed in monotheism and the

¹³³ *The Works of Sir William Jones*, ii, 132.

¹³⁴ *Asiatick Researches* (10 vols., reprinted from Calcutta edn., London, 1801), i, p. ix.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. xii.

Supreme Being, for the expression for 'Heaven' in Chinese texts was thought to be the equivalent to the Christian word 'God'. In the same vein, Jones found that Indian mythical writings contained many points in common with the deism expressed by English writers. Jones compared Barrow's writings with Indian texts, and concluded that,

this passage from Barrow ... differs only from the mythical theology of the *Súfis* and *Yógis*, as the flowers and fruits of *Europe* differ in scent and flavour from those of *Asia*, or as *Europeans* differs from *Asiatick* eloquence: the same strain, in poetical measure, would rise up to the odes of Spenser on *Divine Love* and *Beauty* ... If these two passage were translated into *Sanscrit* and *Persian*, I am confident, that the *Védátis* and *Súfis* would consider them as an epitome of their common system; for they concur believing, that the souls of men differ infinitely in *degree*, but not at all in *kind*, from the divine spirit, of which they are *particles*, and in which they will ultimately be absorbed.¹³⁶

Comparison, generic similarity and connection were Jones' concerns and, indeed, his world-view. This Linnæan system of collecting cultural examples and species was also reflected in Jones's perspective on jurisprudence. He claimed that '[t]he great system of jurisprudence, like that of the Universe, consists of many subordinate systems, all of which are connected by nice links and beautiful dependencies.'¹³⁷ In the pursuit of similarities, cross-cultural understanding seemed to be, for Jones, both achievable and desirable.

Also, Jones encouraged his Society's fellows to conduct cross-national explorations in cultural exchanges among Hindostan, Egyptians and Europeans.¹³⁸ From 1786

¹³⁶ *The Works of Sir William Jones*, i, 448-50. The Barrow might be Issac Barrow (1630-77). He was the Master of Trinity College, Cambridge and Newton's teacher. Though famed in mathematics, Barrow published some sermons and poems. Jones described Barrow that 'he would have been the sublimest mathematician, if his religious turn of mind had not made him the deepest theologian of his age'. *Ibid.*, 446.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, vi, 682.

¹³⁸ *Asiatick Researches*, i, p. x.

onwards, Jones delivered annual discourses to the Society on ‘the *five* principal nations’ of Asia: the Indians, the Chinese, the Tartars, the Arabs and the Persians. He intended to see if these five nations had ‘*any* common origin’.¹³⁹ It is already a well-known fact that Jones was the most prestigious supporter of the thesis about the Indo-European language family in ‘The Third Anniversary Discourse’ in 1787.¹⁴⁰ None the less, in the same speech, Jones remarked that ‘Chinese grammar corresponds nearly with that observed in Tibet, and hardly differs from that which the Hindus consider as the invention of their God.’ Moreover, the language of the Hindus had ‘an immemorial affinity with old *Persians, Ethiopians, and Egyptians; the Phenicians, Greek, and Tuscans; the Scythians or Goths, and Celts; the Chinese, Japanese, and Peruvians.*’¹⁴¹ Like Dante and Leibniz, Jones wanted to discover linguistic roots in the post-Babel world. But it is more important to note that Jones consciously identified Asia as a cultural subdivision of the world, with India its focal point. In the Fourth Discourse, Jones asserted that ‘India is in the middle amongst Persia and China, Tartary and Java.’¹⁴² Early in 1784, Jones hinted that Indian religion had a great deal of similarity with those of Egypt, China, Persia, Phrygia, Phoenicia and Syria.¹⁴³ The religious and linguistic affinities and connections of ‘principal’ nations of Asia further linked cultural explorations with commercial concerns. Indeed, the Asiatick Society and its journal, *Asiatick Researches*, became the

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 417-8.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 422ff. The first scholar who suggested this affinity was the Dutchman Marcus Zeurius Boxhorn. Mukherjee, *Sir William Jones*, pp. 92ff. For a succinct but explicit discussion of this post-Babel view of human history and Biblical belief of homogenous origin of man, see Thomas R. Trautmann, ‘The Lives of Sir William Jones’, *Sir William Jones 1746-1794*, ed. Alexander Murray (Oxford, 1998), pp. 105ff.

¹⁴¹ *Asiatick Researches*, i, 424, 430-1.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, ii, 3.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, i, 221-2.

crucial source of commercial information. It contained not only the literary interests of its members, but also travel and reconnaissance reports. An emissary sent to Tibet reported in the Journal that '[m]any merchants had already brought their commodities to market' which was 'well stocked with *English* and *Indian* articles'.¹⁴⁴ By 1821, the Asiatick Society became a cultural and commercial emblem of the British empire. A quasi-travel-guide for English 'fireside travellers', published in 1824, remarked that at the home of the Society, 'you will find fragments of sculpture, vases, tables, coins, arms and natural curiosities from every part of India,' and 'canoes and models, swords, clubs, spears ... war-dresses, and fabrics from all the islands in the Indian Archipelago.'¹⁴⁵

Culture and commerce were inter-linked in Jones's mind, and was embodied in the organisation of the Asiatick Society. Smith had written about the single and developed market of Asia; and Jones gave this a cultural and linguistic meaning. No matter how erroneous were Jones's views of Chinese, Tibetan and Japanese languages, his emphasis on the cultural links in Asia and on Indian centralism was firmly established. According to John Shore, governor-general and President of the Society in succession to Jones in 1794, Jones left behind an unfinished massive collection of *Desiderata* in which Jones planned to study the classics and cultures of those five principal nations of Asia.¹⁴⁶ In fact, Jones himself had studied Chinese and had planned to translate 'The Second Classical Book of the Chinese'. He even suggested that the East India Company should invite some Chinese to India to teach British officials Chinese literature, in order to

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 215.

¹⁴⁵ Moyle Sherer, *Sketches of India* (London, 1821), p. 127.

¹⁴⁶ *Asiatick Researches*, iv, 181-3.

‘create greater national wealth and prosperity’.¹⁴⁷ The exchange of literary knowledge seemed to be a prerequisite of commercial exchange. For Jones, Europeans were indebted to the British for their knowledge of ‘Sanskrit’, while the British were indebted to the Dutch for ‘Arabick’ and to the French for knowledge of Chinese languages.¹⁴⁸ In Jones’s statement, there was a suggestion of competition. And this competition was not only for cultural achievement, but was also the source of wars of commerce.

The marriage of literature and commerce brought about a polite culture, of which a sense of tolerance was an intrinsic part. Jones’s and Robertson’s literary careers with regard to India were both marked by tolerance and temperance. But Jones’s sentiment of tolerance extended to practical colonial needs. In his Preface to *Institutes of Hindu Law: or the Ordinance of Menu*, Jones concluded,

Whatever opinion in short may be formed of Menu and his Laws ... it must be remembered, that those laws are actually revered ... by nations of great importance to the political and commercial interests of *Europe*, and particularly by many millions of *Hindu* subjects, whose well directed industry would add largely to the wealth of *Britain* ... ¹⁴⁹

Jones called for European respect for the Asians’ affection for their indigenous laws, and thought that this would enhance the security of British rule and commerce. Tolerance was the safeguard of commerce, in both senses of the word. As Cannon points out, Jones’s ultimate concern with the British Empire in India were the principles of commercial society.¹⁵⁰ Nevertheless, this view of tolerance was situated in the practical context of colonialism. From a practical point of view, Jones hoped that his comparative

¹⁴⁷ *The Works of Sir William Jones*, i, 373.

¹⁴⁸ *Asiatick Researches*, i, 355, ii, 5.

¹⁴⁹ *The Works of Sir William Jones*, iii, 62.

¹⁵⁰ Kevin R. Brine, ‘Introduction’ to *Objects of Enquiry: The Life, Contributions, and Influences of Sir William Jones*, ed. G. Cannon and L. R. Brine (New York, 1995), p. 14.

view of different cultures would help the British find the generic links between European laws and Indian laws. Once the links were found, an ordered picture of the Indo-European family of jurisprudential ideas would, like Indo-European languages, unfold. Thus, mutual understanding and learning would become easily accessible. Legal grammars would certainly help the colonials to understand the natives, and, hopefully, *vice versa*.

... a clear and concise treatise, written in the *Persian* or *Arabian* language, on the law of *Contracts*, and evincing the general conformity between the *Asiatick* and *European* systems, would contribute, as much as any regulation whatever, to bring our *English* law into good odour among those, whose fate it is to be under our dominion, and whose happiness ought to be a serious and continual object of our care.¹⁵¹

This meant the codification of Indian laws. Indian indigenous laws should be respected because they were respected by Indians. Moreover, Europeans could understand Indian laws, because they formed part of a system where problems could be discovered once the linguistic and metaphoric barriers had been removed. As will be seen, James Mill agreed with Jones, in respect of Indian affairs, on nothing but the importance of codifying Indian laws. Between Indian and European societies, James Mill did not tend to find similarities, but dissimilarities, on the basis of which Mill argued that Indian society was qualitatively inferior to European society in terms of its civilisation. Mill's interest in finding dissimilarities between Indian and European societies was indebted to Stewart's teaching.

Dugald Stewart (1753-1828) agreed that the discovery of Indian ancient texts created a storehouse of knowledge. 'In the meantime, a new and unexpected mine of intellectual wealth has been opened to the learned of Europe, in these regions of the

¹⁵¹ *The Works of Sir William Jones*, vi, 676.

East'.¹⁵² Nonetheless, he challenged Jones's valiant admiration of Indian society and his assertion that Sanskrit was of '*unfathomable antiquity*', being a sacred language from its very origin.¹⁵³ Stewart contended that Sanskrit was the language that the Persians learned from the Greeks in the Greek colony - Sanskrit was in the beginning a sort of *Gypsy jargon*, or kitchen Greek. Afterwards, following the study of grammarians and philologists, it gradually became polished and refined. Stewart argued that, 'the most polished languages of modern Europe' were developed from 'the intercourse produced by conquest between Roman soldiers and Gothic barbarians'. It would not be false, in Stewart's mind, to assert that Sanskrit was a product of the Greek colonisation of the Persians.¹⁵⁴ Given his conviction that Sanskrit originated from Greek, Stewart was not prepared to accept the assumption of the 'unfathomable antiquity' of the Indian language. What made Stewart even more uneasy was that William Jones' emphatic assertion that 'IT [Sanskrit] WAS NEVER, AT ANY PERIOD, THE VULGAR OR VERNACULAR SPEECH OF INDIA'.¹⁵⁵ Stewart argued that it was normal for language to be improved with the progress of society. For instance, English progressed and refined itself from King Alfred's paraphrase of Boethius to the Spectators of Mr Addison.¹⁵⁶ Given the progressive idea of sociological linguistics, Stewart criticised

¹⁵² *Collected Works of Dugald Stewart*, i, 425. Stewart was genuinely fond of newly discovered knowledge with regard to Asian ideas. He discussed Hindu idealism with James Mackintosh. The collected works of William Jones kept at Edinburgh University Library was formerly owned and bequeathed by Stewart.

¹⁵³ Stewart, *Elements of the Philosophy of Human Mind* (3 vols., London, 1792), iii, 100, 138. The former statement is made by Halhed and the latter by William Jones.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 120.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 125n. Capitals in original.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 119.

those Celtic scholars who ‘talk of the Gaelic in a like extravagant strain’.¹⁵⁷

Like Smith, Stewart argued that language was refined gradually with the enlargement of human experience and social interaction. Language progressed in the same manner as the ‘natural progress of opulence’.¹⁵⁸ In short, the development of languages went hand in hand with the general improvement of the human mind, as the invention of abstract words were brought into existence ‘in much later institutions’.¹⁵⁹ Like Smith and Robertson, Stewart argued that language developed from simplicity to artificiality corresponding to the growth in the perceptions of the human mind, which was in response to the stages of society.¹⁶⁰

As a professional philosopher, Stewart was more interested in the analytical method of studying cultures and languages. Stewart believed that the secret of the growth of language lay in its structure, grammar and other internal features.

If such a scholar as Dr Bentley or Dr. Parr should ever make a serious object of studying Sanscrit, he would be able. I should think, without much difficulty, to ascertain, *from internal evidence*, which of the two languages [Greek and Sanskrit] was the primitive, and which the derivative dialect. He would also be enabled to decide, whether the mechanism of the Sanscrit affords any satisfactory evidence of its being manufactured by such a deliberate and systematical process as I have conjectured. It seems to be in this way alone that these points can be settled beyond controversy.¹⁶¹

Dr. Bentley was an important figure in the controversy about the antiquity of Indian civilisation. He published an essay on Indian astronomy in the *Asiatick Researches* and maintained that the astronomy currently used in India was much less antique than usually

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 126-7n. It is very likely that Stewart had the Poems of Ossian in his mind in this comment.

¹⁵⁸ Smith, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Letters*, ed. J. C. Bryce (Oxford, 1983), p.203ff.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 206, 216-7.

¹⁶⁰ For a discussion of Smith’s linguistic mode and William Jones’s comparative philology, see J. C. Bryce, Introduction to *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Letters*, particularly p. 25ff.

¹⁶¹ Stewart, *Elements*, iii, 123. Italics original.

thought. This article then created a debate in the *Edinburgh Review* in which Alexander Hamilton, John Playfair and James Mill were involved. By mentioning Bentley, Stewart implied that Sanskrit was not as ancient or time-honoured as Jones suggested. Trautmann states that Stewart denied that Sanskrit resembled Greek ‘because it *is* Greek.’ By ‘*is*’, Trautmann meant that Stewart was a Saidian Orientalist presenting the ontological dichotomy of the West and the East. If Trautmann’s inference is correct, then Stewart’s discussion of linguistic progress was but a rational pretension, used to cover his Eurocentricism. Stewart hardly needed to make such a statement to elucidate his concern for the progress of language.¹⁶²

Stewart’s main influence on his students in respect to philosophy of language and Indian society was his instrumental view of languages. For Stewart, one of the important factors in cultural or social progress was the refinement in the growth of ideas. On the other hand, languages, for Stewart, were not ideas themselves, but only tools for conveying ideas. Stewart remarked,

Aristotle ... *well knew* that our knowledge of *things* chiefly depending on the proper application of language as an INSTRUMENT OF THOUGHT, the true art of reasoning is nothing but a language accurately defined and skilfully arranged; an opinion which, after many idle declamations against his barren generalities and verbal trifling, philosophers have begun very generally to adopt.¹⁶³

Many of Stewart’s pupils accepted the instrumental view of language. For instance, Jeffrey maintained that Chinese ideograms might appeal to a learned Chinese, but the Chinese language appeared ‘ridiculously obvious and trifling’ when it was translated into

¹⁶² Thomas Trautmann, ‘The Life of Sir William Jones’, p. 117. The italics is original. I have failed to find out the reference that Trautmann indicates. For Stewart’s antagonism to the etymological approach to linguistic studies, see Hans Aarsleff, *The Study of Language in England, 1780- 1860* (Princeton, 1967), pp. 102 ff.

¹⁶³ Stewart, *Elements*, ii, 136. The emphases are original.

European languages.¹⁶⁴ From an instrumentalist viewpoint, to diffuse knowledge was to diffuse ideas, not languages. Stewart particularly drew on Sanskrit for his instrumental view of languages,

The Sanscrit has, accordingly, become to philosophers an object of curiosity rather on its own intrinsic account, than from any idea of its instrumental utility.¹⁶⁵

Such an emphasis on the utility of language and its social function was to affect the British colonial policy of educational reform in India. John Leyden (1775-1811), a classmate of Walter Scott, Cockburn, Jeffrey and Mill at Edinburgh and later an Orientalist and colonial surgeon in Madras, was also a pupil of Stewart.¹⁶⁶ Leyden enthusiastically persuaded William Bentinck that Indian vernacular languages, rather than English, should be taken as the medium of education.¹⁶⁷ Mill also stood on the side of supporting vernacular languages as the medium for educating Indians. He believed that ‘Indian vernaculars were just as efficient’ and ‘useful’ as English.¹⁶⁸ English ideas, not the English languages constituted Stewart and Mill’s cultural identity. After 1835, Macaulay’s famous or notorious Minute of Education supporting the Anglicization of India was eventually approved by Bentinck. Majeed correctly argues that the Minute was an Evangelical, rather than a Utilitarian victory. In the context of the Scottish

¹⁶⁴ Francis Jeffrey, ‘Barrow’s Travels in China’, *Edinburgh Review*, (Jan. 1805), p. 279.

¹⁶⁵ Stewart, *Elements*, iii, 100.

¹⁶⁶ Bain, *James Mill*, p. 15. Henry Cockburn, *Memoir of his Time*, p. 34. Guthrie asserts that Leyden proceeded to ‘Moral and Natural Philosophy’ and ‘Divinity’ at Edinburgh. This is correct. But he also asserts that Leyden contributed to the *Edinburgh Review* in his early student time. This is certainly wrong. Cf. Dr Douglas Guthrie, ‘Report of Proceedings 1962-1963 of the Scottish Society of the History of Medicine’, p. 29.

¹⁶⁷ John Rosselli, *Lord William Bentinck the making of a Liberal Imperialist, 1774-1839* (London, 1974), p. 135.

¹⁶⁸ Majeed, *Ungoverned Imagining*, p. 141.

Enlightenment, however, it is evident that Stewart's instrumental view of language played an important part in Leyden and Mill's views of educational reform in India, although it was unquestionably absent in Macaulay's thought. Also, Stewart's instrumentalism towards language was perfectly consistent with the principles of Utilitarianism. Mill, like Leyden, did not need a Benthamite Utilitarianism to favour Indian indigenous languages for his educational plans.¹⁶⁹

Stewart's distrust of Sanskrit was in accordance with his disbelief in the antiquity of Hindu laws. Stewart's analytical mind enabled him to question Jones's assertion that Hindu law tracts originated 'some millions of years ago'. Stewart pithily remarked,

In this, however, as in many other instances of the information we have lately received from that quarter of the globe, we can only indulge our wonder, without possessing sufficient *data* to serve as a groundwork for satisfactory speculation.¹⁷⁰

Stewart's suspicion called for a separation of mythology from history. Many of Stewart's students were ready to accept his suspicion and his analytical approach. Jeffrey remarked that, though Jones was unquestionably a 'consummate scholar, - an accomplished philologist, - an elegant critic ... we do not feel quite so well assured of the extent of his *philosophical* capacity'.¹⁷¹ The philosophical capacity that Jeffrey referred to was Scottish philosophical history.

Moreover, Stewart's picture of Asia was very different from that of Smith's generation. Stewart did not think that Asia was a rich continent as many of his predecessors did. In the Malthusian vein, Stewart argued that China and India both

¹⁶⁹ I differ from Majeed's opinion at this point. Majeed argues that Mill was indebted to Tooke for his instrumental view of languages. Majeed, *ibid.*, pp. 153-5.

¹⁷⁰ *Collected Works of Dugald Stewart*, ix, 152-3.

¹⁷¹ *Edinburgh Review*, (Jan. 1805), p. 331.

suffered greatly from their very large populations and intermittent famines.

In China, where population has been forced by a variety of unnatural expedients, by the permission which parents have to expose their children, by the singularly abstemious habits of the people, and by the indiscriminate use they are led to make of everything through which life can be supported, - the fatal effects of a policy, artificially contrived to extend the multiplication of the race beyond its just limits, are seen in all their magnitude. In such circumstances, any deficiency in the ordinary produce, arising from an unfavourable season, cannot fail to be followed by the horrors of famine. The miseries which have so often been experienced from this in Hindostan are, in like manner, the obvious consequences of a population pushed to its utmost possible limit, relatively to the means of subsistence.¹⁷²

In contrast to his dark view of Asian societies, Stewart was optimistic about the progress of the human mind and society. Pufendorf argued that what was conspicuous or distinct about humanity was that human beings were born with physical weakness in the natural world; thus, they needed the aid of society. Stewart emphasised the rationality that distinguished humans from other species.

They [Animals] are incapable of looking forward to consequences, or of comparing together the different gratifications of which they are susceptible; ... But man is able to take a comprehensive survey of his various principles of action, and to form a plan of conduct for the attainment of his favourite objects.¹⁷³

In the light of this confidence in human rationality or free will, Stewart held a truly positive Lutheran and cosmopolitan attitude to the world. He consciously linked the Reformation with the invention of printing; and appreciated the Reformation and described it as 'a general diffusion of knowledge in gradually clearing truth from that admixture of error.'¹⁷⁴ Stewart's concern with futurity was marked. Stewart's predecessors, such as Millar and Ferguson, believed that history rotated in a cyclical

¹⁷² *Collected Works of Dugald Stewart*, viii, 200.

¹⁷³ Dugald Stewart, *Outlines of Moral Philosophy* (Edinburgh, 1845), p. 72.

¹⁷⁴ *Collected Works of Dugald Stewart*, i, 506.

mode. Civilised nations could possibly return to barbarism.¹⁷⁵ But Stewart's disinclination to believe in the possible corruption of civilisation was formidable. Although he found discouraging examples in history of the decline and fall of empires, he ultimately believed that, in the modern era, civilisation would never suffer again from setbacks, because of the invention and improvement of the art of war and printing.

How mournful are the vicissitudes which history exhibits to us in the course of human affairs; and how little foundation do they afford to our sanguine prospects concerning futurity! If in those parts of the earth which were formerly inhabited by barbarians, we now see the most splendid exertions of genius, and the happiest forms of civil policy, we behold others which in ancient times were the seats of science, of civilisation, and of liberty, at present immersed in superstition, and laid waste by despotism. ... In opposition to these discouraging views of the state and prospects of man, it may be remarked in general, that in the course of these latter ages, a variety of events have happened in the history of the world ... The alterations which have taken place in the art of war ... have given to civilized nations a security against the irruptions of barbarians, which they never before possessed.¹⁷⁶

Because of the security of civilised nations, printing and the circulation of knowledge would not be incurred any longer. Though not as influential as some nineteenth-century thinkers such as Karl Marx, Stewart's belief in historical inevitability hinted at an aggressive confidence in progress.

[The arts of printing] may, with truth, be considered as the natural result of a state of the world, when a number of great and contiguous nations are all engaged in the study of literature, in the pursuit of science, and in the practice of the arts; insomuch, that I do not think it extravagant to affirm, that, if this invention had not been made by the particular person to whom it is ascribed, the same art, or some analogous art, answering a similar purpose, would have infallibly been invented by some other person, and at no very distant period. ... we may venture to predict with confidence, that, in every country, it will gradually operate to widen the circle of science and civilisation; to distribute more equally among all the members of the community, the advantages of their political union

¹⁷⁵ Spadafora, *Idea of Progress*, pp. 274, 285.

¹⁷⁶ *The Collected Works of Dugald Stewart*, ii, 241-2. Mill later quoted this statement in his translation of Charles Villers', *An Essay on the Spirit and Influence of the Reformation of Luther* (London, 1805), p. 26n. Stewart's lament may remind readers of Hegel's even more famous aphorism: the only thing we learn from history is that we have learnt nothing from it. Many Romanticists tried to disprove cyclical theories of history.

... The science of legislation, too, with all the other branches of knowledge which are connected with human improvement, may be expected to advance with rapidity ...¹⁷⁷

Inspired by this belief in progress, Mill went so far as to consider printing, the Reformation and progress as being virtually interchangeable

Moreover, Stewart's theme that the diffusion of knowledge or the enlightenment of human minds was the antithesis of despotism had a great influence on his pupils' views of non-European societies. In his work on Africa, Leyden described the Moors as oppressed by despotism, and, consequently, benumbed in mental power.

Among the individuals, little diversity of character prevails, for despotism represses the magnanimous exertions of genius, and destroys the peculiarities of the mind, by rendering only one system of manners safe.¹⁷⁸

Likewise, James Mill translated and published Charles Villers's *An Essay on the Spirit and Influence of the Reformation of Luther* in 1805. In a translator's note, James Mill quoted at length Stewart's idea of perfectibility discussed above. According to Alexander Bain, Mill started working on the *History of British India* in 1806.¹⁷⁹ The passage quoted from Stewart's work impressed Mill when he decided to reject the cycle of civilisation and superstition, or the commonly-held belief in Indian immutability. Mill might have hoped that the ancient seat of science of India should not be further laid waste by barbarian despotism.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 243-4.

¹⁷⁸ Leyden called his time 'the Age of Enlightenment'. John Leyden, *Historical and Philosophical Sketch of the Discoveries & Settlements of the Europeans in Northern and Western Africa* (Edinburgh, 1799), p. 23.

¹⁷⁹ Bain, *James Mill*, p. 61.

CHAPTER 3

NEW TEXTS ON ASIAN CIVILISATION AND JAMES MILL

i. Charles Grant and the New Texts on Indian Civilisation

The British dramatically changed their perceptions of the world, civilisation, colonies and Asian societies, in the last decade of the eighteenth century, not only because of the French Revolution, but also because British experience and knowledge of Asia had undergone a profound change. Popular politics and campaigns for religious values were active in the post-French Revolution age. Enlightenment concerns with absolutist monarchy attracted much less attention. Besides, with the American and French revolutionary wars, the British found themselves in urgent need of a new market in Asia. It was a time of active exploration and inquiry. This chapter will demonstrate how the new texts and preoccupations with which the texts were presented, created a setting for the British to discuss Asian societies. As a philosopher, James Mill purposefully and self-consciously worked on the setting for his *History of British India*.

Charles Grant (1746-1823), ‘the most canting Presbyterian’ that Scotland had ever produced, as Joseph Price called him, was one of the important figures whose discussions of Asian societies were greatly to change the way British people perceived them.¹ In 1792, Grant published his *Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain, particularly with respect to Morals; and on the means of improving it*, to persuade the Commons and the Board of Control to include

¹ Ainslie Thomas Embree, *Charles Grant and British Rule in India* (London, 1962), p. 58.

permission to encourage educational and missionary work in the East India Charter Act of 1793. Grant's view of Indian society was simple. He stated, in contrast to the general impression of the Asian or Indian riches, that India was an economically poor and morally wretched country. More important, Grant argued, the two dark sides of Indian society came from the same source: its religion, Hinduism. Hinduism represented despotism and fatalism. This was the reason that the Hindus were not able to emerge from slavery. Grant's interpretation of Indian society could be described as religionism.

To the question 'Why is it that so few of our manufactures and commodities are vended here [in India]? Grant replied, 'Not merely because the taste of the people is not generally formed to the use of them, but because they have not the means of purchasing them.'² Also, social disorders prevailed in India. Grant repudiated Adam's view that robbery was rare in India, and remarked on 'the numerous murders, robberies, and burglaries, daily committed, and general insecurity of person and property, which prevails in the interior part of the country.'³ From the perspective of religion, Grant attributed the debased conditions of India to the lack of free will, and to the inclination to fatalism.

Doubtless the corrupt administration of criminal justice in Bengal, for many years under the authority of the Nabob, has greatly aggravated disorders of this nature [of robbery and thefts] ... They [the Hindus] believe that they are destined by an inevitable necessity to their profession ... they therefore go on without compunction, and are prepared to resign life.⁴

² Charles Grant, *Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain, particularly with respect to Morals; and on the means of improving it*, reprinted in *Parliamentary Papers &c East India Company* (1812-1813), x. For the quotation, see p. 111.

³ Quoted from *ibid.*, p. 35.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

Likewise, Grant followed enlightenment views of women's social conditions. But he interpreted the phenomenon of Indian female slavery and fatherly despotic power from the viewpoint of free will. He described Asian households as despotic and held that in India family slaves were prevalent, as the selling of infants and children was allowed. In addition, women were allowed to burn themselves on a funeral pyre with their dead husbands, and were not encouraged to re-marry. 'Second marriages of women, appears to be unknown and repugnant to the Hindoo law and usage.'⁵ All in all, the Hindus neither knew nor wanted to treat their women better.

According to the despotic manners of the East, the husband is lord, and the wife a servant; seldom does he think of making her a companion or a friend. Polygamy, which is tolerated among the Hindoos, tends still more to destroy all rational domestic society.⁶ [emphasis added]

The view of women as 'companions' of men followed Millar's interpretation of the manners of commercial society. But, unlike Millar, Grant saw the failure of Indian women to be treated as social companions as a problem, not as a natural consequence of general social conditions. More importantly, Grant did not explain the 'problem' from a materialist perspective, through an appeal to the ownership of property and mode of subsistence, but from the point of view of their degree of religious enlightenment.

Moreover, Grant's use of Montesquieu's political language of despotism was more in line with John Logan than any other: it was an organic view of the despotism of Indian society. By reporting that 'the husband is lord, and the wife a servant', Grant further asserted that

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 56-7.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

The despotic principle actuates all the subordinate offices, and posts of authority ... every man is a slave to those above him, and a despot to those below him; the more he is oppressed, the more he oppresses; and thus is diffused a temper of universal enmity.⁷

Grant's organic view of society seemed to be derived from Hindu religion, in which the four castes, Brahmins, Kheterees, Vyse and Sooders, were allegorically described as being generated from Brahma's mouth, arm, thigh and foot respectively.

Despotism is not only the principle of the government of Hindostan, but an original, fundamental, and irreversible principle in the very frame of society. ... Now the evils that flow from such an arrangement [referring to the caste system], are infinite. Other modes of de[s]potism lead in their very excess and abuse to a remedy, but here the chain of servitude is indissoluble and eternal.⁸

On the other hand, because Grant believed that consciousness, free will and knowledge played a constructive role in civilisation, he strongly renounced the doctrine of Montesquieuean physical determinism. In the Humean vein, Grant rejected the notion that the defining qualities of Indian society and national character resulted from physical causes and were, therefore, 'unalterable'.⁹ This was in contrast to Robertson and many other philosophical historians, who believed in the immutability of Asian civilisation.

If he [the author] has given an unfavourable description [of the Indians], his wish is not to excite detestation, but to engage compassion, and to make it apparent, that what speculation may have ascribed to physical and unchangeable causes, springs from moral sources capable of correction. ... We cannot presume from the past state of any people, with respect to improvement in arts, that they would, under different circumstances, for ever continue the same. The history of many nations who have advanced from rudeness to refinement, contradicts such a hypothesis ... In fact, what is now offered, is nothing more than a proposal for the further civilization of a people, who had very early made a considerable progress in improvement; but who, by deliberate and successful plans of fraud and imposition, were rendered first stationary, then retrograde.¹⁰

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp, 39, 80.

ii. Grant, Robertson and James Mill

Although Grant picked up some sociological theses from the Scottish Enlightenment, the emphasis on religion led him far away from the main trend of thought in the Enlightenment. Grant believed in the importance of free will and consciousness in social improvement, and held that the problems and stagnation of Indian society could only be remedied by religion. He suggested that by ‘planting our language, our knowledge, our opinions, and our religion, in our Asiatick territories, we shall put a great work beyond the reach of contingencies’; and the Indians ‘would be instructed in the nature and perfections of the one true God’, and ‘could see a pure, complete, and perfect system of morals and of duty’.¹¹ Focusing on free will and religious enlightenment, Grant seemed not to argue that Indian society was backward in terms of material achievement.

Grant turned from Robertson’s enlightenment concerns with commerce and tolerance to a preoccupation with missionaries objections. Grant was familiar with Robertson’s works, particularly with the *Disquisition*. Neither Robertson nor Grant provided an explanation of the origin of British empire in India. But they saw the imperialist duty of ruling India in very different ways. Robertson believed that India had attained a high level of civilisation. But, he did not try to legitimise Clive’s Plassey campaign, which gave the British supremacy over the commercial, administrative and jurisdiction rights of Bengal.¹² Robertson probably regarded Clive’s military action as

¹¹ Grant, *Observations*, pp. 79, 111.

¹² There is a conspicuous difference between the relative silence among the eighteenth century British literati about Clive’s action and Macaulay’s glorification of that action. The difference is a good indication of how different the second half of the eighteenth century and the first half of nineteenth century were in self-confidence and self-esteem. Also, it is interesting and important to understand why Macaulay wrote

taken out of self-defence, as did Burke.¹³ On the other hand, he agreed that the British should govern India with an enlightened and tolerant imperial policy. He suggested that the British in the role of imperial sovereign should conduct itself in a proper and civilised manner, and he urged the British to emulate the Muslim conqueror of India, the Emperor Akbar. He lauded Akbar because the Muslim ruler understood Indian civilisation so deeply that he was able to govern India well and, consequently, earned himself the appellation of 'The Guardian of Mankind'.¹⁴

It was by an impartial and candid inquiry into their manners, that the Emperor Akbar was led to consider the Hindoos as no less entitled to protection and favour than his other subjects, and to govern them with such equity and mildness ...¹⁵

To Robertson and many other British thinkers in the eighteenth century, the Muslim conquerors in India were not at all comparable to the barbarians who destroyed the Roman constitution, while under the discipline of Roman civilisation.

It is interesting to note that Grant differed little from Robertson with regard to the nature of imperial ideals. Grant quoted Robertson's work and maintained that Alexander the Great knew that,

all distinctions between the victors and the vanquished must be abolished, and his European and Asiatic subjects be incorporated and become one people, *by obeying the*

that the English should not be ignorant of Clive's great achievement, which he held was comparable with that of Alexander the Great. Robertson wishfully believed that the British, after conquering by force, could live with the Indians peacefully and leave Indian customs and institutions intact. In fact, Robertson was to promise a colonial policy with an implication that both the British and Indians could forget the military event of 1757. On the other hand, Macaulay tried to justify the conquering action by bringing Anglicisation and the civilising mission into the scenario. The most plausible attempt to rationalise the conquest of India that Robertson would have agreed with can be found in Burke. Burke regarded the history of British India as a providential history, a 'chance of fate'. For this point, see F. G. Whelan, *Edmund Burke and India*, pp. 6ff.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 35ff.

¹⁴ Robertson, *Disquisition*, pp. 333-4.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 333.

*same laws, and by adopting the same manners, institutions, and discipline.*¹⁶

Grant, then, turned Robertson's imperial ideals into a strong argument for assimilation. He contended that just as the Muslims had introduced the Persian language into government and public affairs in India, the British should introduce English. Above all, the English language was to be an instrument for Christian dissemination. And Christianity would help the Indians to be more rational and susceptible to knowledge, upon which the material improvement relied.

With our language, much of our useful literature might, and would, in time, be communicated. The art of Printing, would enable us to disseminate our writings in a way the Persians never could have done. ... New views of duty as rational creatures would open upon them.

Through the medium of English, the Indians 'would be instructed in the nature and perfections of the one true God.'¹⁷

Grant clearly differed from Robertson in point of enthusiasm for missionary work, however. Robertson's calls for tolerant government in India rested on the theory that cultural assimilation occurred through a natural process whereby the less civilised people learnt from those more advanced in civilisation. Therefore, there was no presumptuous need to execute or force such a civilising process. But, from Grant's viewpoint, as the British authorities prohibited missionary work in India, there was no ground to expect a natural process of cultural communication or competition. Also, since he held free will to be the primary force of civilisation, Grant believed that an active policy of interfering in the process of cultural assimilation was demanded, even indispensable. Grant

¹⁶ Grant, *Observations*, p. 104. Emphasis in original. Grant mistook Robertson's *Disquisition* as being entitled *The Ancient European Intercourse with India*.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 78, 79.

emphasised that his purpose was only to give the Indians an opportunity of hearing Christian doctrines: 'to communicate the Christian system to those who have never hitherto had an opportunity of hearing it', 'in a mild, pacific way'.¹⁸

Grant even envisaged giving government back into the hands of the Indians when Christianity matured Indian society. He suggested that the British should not be afraid of the prospect that once the Indians learned western values and knowledge they would learn to desire English liberty, the English form of government, and legislating for their own country. He urged that '[a] Christian nation cannot possibly maintain or countenance such a principle' of keeping the Indians in their state of subordination because they were afraid of losing power.¹⁹ Holding evangelical views of society and humanity, Grant did not believe that the law itself would change Indian manners and he emphasised the catalytic role religion had to play in changing Hindu institutions. Grant wrote that, 'the Hindoo writers, and the Hindoo laws, express the worst opinion of their women, and seem to place all security in vigilance, none in principle.'²⁰ Grant also asserted that 'morals are more important than good laws', and that 'laws are of no avail without manners'.²¹ Religion could also be a buttress for laws because in the Indian

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 91. In comparison with the 1790s, support for missionary work in India became much more politicised after 1806. In 1806, a serious mutiny occurred amongst the Sepoy soldiers at Vellore. Many attributed the turmoil to 'the effects of missionary propaganda'. Thomas Twining urged the British authorities to ban any sort of missionary activity in India, including the printing of the Scriptures in Indian languages. Scott Waring accused Claudius Buchanan, a protégé of Grant's, of being responsible for the military revolt, as he used the disguise of being a chaplain to propagate Christianity among the Indians. E. M. Howse, *Saints in Politics*, pp. 80-1. John Bebb, a director of the East India Company, argued that Grant and his associates did not foresee how 'Mahometan fanatics or Hindoo zealots' would interact with Anglican clergymen. John Bebb, 'Letter to the Court of Directors', 22 April 1813 and 31 May 1813, *Parliamentary Papers* (1812-1813), x, no.4. The idea of a natural process of cultural assimilation became even more difficult.

¹⁹ Grant, *Observations*, pp. 92-4.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 88, 89.

mentality laws went hand in hand with religion. Under these circumstances, without replacing the existing religion, neither European culture nor its modern legal system would be able to take root in the soil of India.

The Hindoo law stands upon the same authority as the Hindoo religion; both are parts of one system, which they believe to have been divinely revealed. That law is regarded by them therefore with a superstitious veneration, which institutions avowedly of human origin do not produce; so that even under a foreign yoke, which in various particulars superseded its injunctions, it still maintained its credit. Hence may be deduced, in part, the predilection of that people, especially of the leading orders, for their ancient state and peculiar customs, which in all the long period of Mahomedan rule, prevented them from being assimilated to the institutions of their conquerors.²²

It is crucial, for the present study, to note that Grant procured for himself an important place in the history of the Scottish imperialist outlook from William Robertson to James Mill. Grant's new text on Indian society dealt a blow to the eighteenth century's image of the high civilisation of India. At this point, Mill was a close follower of Grant. But Grant's religious concerns and interpretation of Indian society were not taken up by Mill. At this point, Mill came closer to the intellectual tradition of the Scottish Enlightenment, than to his early education in Divinity. In the history of imperial ideas, James Mill meant to take Grant's thesis on Indian society into the Scottish intellectual framework. While Robertson found difficulty to draw on the historical mind to portray a picture of Indian society, Mill was to employ this Robertsonian historiographical method to demonstrate Grant's and many other nineteenth-century writers' concerns of Indian backwardness.

In the nineteenth century, Grant found his influence spreading in the circle of the *Quarterly Review*. Many of the *Quarterly*'s reviewers were enthusiastic supporters of

²² *Ibid.*, p. 43.

missionary activity in Asia.²³ One reviewer exclaimed, ‘in diffusing civilisation and Christianity through the world, as a secondary agent in the divine counsels, no kingdom is more responsible than our own’.²⁴ Robert Southey, the poet laureate and the author of the *History of Brazil*, was a frequent contributor to the *Quarterly*. He strongly supported missionary activity abroad and believed in the idea of progress.²⁵ In comparison with the *Quarterly* or Tory reviewers’ concerns with the religious implications of morality, Mill’s concerns with civil society and political institutions stood on the side of the *Edinburgh Review*, which will be the subject matter of the next chapter.

Probably because James Mill did not want to confuse the political defects of India with religious ones, he refrained from appealing to Grant’s authority despite his evident familiarity with Grant’s work. On the other hand, Mill frequently and extensively quoted Henry Strachey, a judge in India. Strachey pronounced an unfavourable opinion of the Indian social orders and the state of security which was in diametric opposition to previous presentations of tranquil and peaceful life. In the eighteenth century, Alexander Dow and John Adams had observed that in India criminal laws were scarcely known to the Hindus, because ‘their motives to bad action are few’.²⁶ Strachey had very different opinions of Indian society with regard to its security and legal system. From 1802 to

²³ *Quarterly Review*, (Oct 1815), p. 38. This is because they were politically sympathetic to the Tory cause. The Clapham Sect of Zachary Macaulay, Wilberforce and many others championed evangelism in non-European worlds.

²⁴ *Quarterly Review*, (Dec. 1811), p. 448.

²⁵ Majeed, *Ungoverned Imagining*, ch. 2, particularly pp. 75-9, 82. Majeed points out Southey’s indebtedness to Kant’s epistemology and view of progress. (pp.76-7) For Southey’s conversion from a young radical to Tory conservative and the interaction of his views of society and his ages, see Geoffrey Carnall, *Robert Southey and his Age* (Oxford, 1960). Walter Scott also shared Southey’s view of moral improvement in India, but it is not clear whether Scott would have supported evangelical missionary work in India. George D. Bearce, *British Attitudes towards to India*, p. 95.

²⁶ Alexander Dow, *History of Hindostan*, p. xxxvi. Adams, *A View of Universal History*, ii, 28.

1805, Strachey consistently reported to Parliament that in India crimes were prevalent, partly because the whole judicial system suffered under the great defect of delaying justice. The British government failed to provide a proper system to prevent crimes. 'We cannot say that men become dacoits, because the punishments are too lenient; they become so, because their chance of escaping altogether is so good A robber even in Bengal is', Strachey continued, 'a man of courage and enterprise; who, though he roughly estimates the risk he is to run by continuing his depredation on the public, is rather apt to under-rate that risk - small as in reality it is.'²⁷ Strachey was James Mill's great informant. Mill's project in his *History* was to a great extent to rationalise Strachey's opinion of Indian society in the light of his knowledge of moral philosophy and philosophical history. On the other hand, it was also to set out a Benthamite project for judicial reform for India.

To be sure, although the favourable opinion of a rich, mild and relaxing Asia had gone forever, some British administrators did not accept the gloomy view of Indian society that Grant offered. On being called to give evidence for the East India Company Charter renewal in 1813, Thomas Munro, also a Scot and a former Governor of Bombay, consciously tried to lead the British away from the general language of civilisation. He found the theories of Smith, Hume and Montesquieu inapplicable to the British administration in India. He also claimed:

With regard to civilization, I do not understand what is meant by the civilization of the Hindoos. In the higher branches of science, in the knowledge of the theory and practice of good government, and in an education which, by banishing prejudice and superstition, opens the mind to receive instruction of every kind from every quarter, they are much inferior to Europeans; but if a good system of agriculture, unrivalled manufacturing skill, a capacity to produce whatever can contribute to convenience or luxury; schools

²⁷ Quoted from Mill, *History*, v, 397-8.

established in every village for teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic; the general practice of hospitality and charity among each other; and, above all, a treatment of the female sex, full of confidence, respect and delicacy, are among the signs which denote a civilized people, then the Hindoos are not inferior to the nations of Europe.²⁸

By no means a theorist, but a practical and able official, Munro hinted at the essential difference between Indian and European societies. Indian society seemed to embody the good qualities of an agricultural society, while Europe had the benefits of industrial development.²⁹ The sentiment expressed in Munro's evidence certainly echoed that aspect of the Scottish tradition of moral philosophy which found an inner affinity with Burkean Romanticism in a post-Revolutionary age.³⁰ But it was exactly the problem of the utility of government that engrossed many British theorists and administrators in India. In short, after the 1790s, India was problematised by British administrators and missionary sympathisers. Many writers, such as James Mackintosh, John Malcolm and James Mill, were engaged in the task of rationalising and solving this supposed 'problem'. The radical Enlightenment project appearing in the post-Revolutionary age had found its most significant expression in Indian affairs.

iii. New knowledge of Chinese civilisation

The new generation's views of Chinese society were also to exert a great impact on James Mill. To the British public, the Chinese Empire was almost a *terra incognita* in terms of personal or linguistic experience. Goverdhan Caul, a colleague of Jones in the

²⁸ Peter Bebb, 'Letter to the Court of Directors', *Parliamentary Papers* (1812-13), x, p.15.

²⁹ For Munro's career and philosophy of governing India, see Burton Stein, *Thomas Munro: the origin of the colonial state and his vision of Empire* (Oxford, 1989) and Eric Stokes, *English Utilitarians and India*, chs. 1 and 2.

³⁰ For the Scottish vision of the pastoral society, see John Dwyer, *The Age of the Passions* (Edinburgh, 1998).

Asiatick Society in Calcutta, confessed that Europe owed all its knowledge of China to the French.³¹ Macartney's embassy to China, in 1793-1794, opened direct British contact with China for the first time. This gave the British a chance to acquire first-hand knowledge of China. After the first British embassy, some 'official' accounts describing the Chinese were published. George Staunton, Macartney's secretary to the embassy, published *An Authentic Account of An Embassy from the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China* in 1797.³² Staunton consciously remarked that his previous knowledge of Chinese civilisation was wrong.

The gentlemen of the Embassy stooped ... to communicate to each other the impressions that remained upon their minds, after passing thro Peking. ... what they have seen ... did not come up to the idea they previously had formed of the capital of China; and they imagined that a Chinese, could he be impartial, would feel a greater gratification in the sight of the ships, the bridges, the squares, several of the public buildings, and the display of wealth in the capital of Great Britain.³³

Whereas the Scottish literati, such as Hume and Kames, had appreciated the rational, moderate and deist culture of the Chinese elite, Staunton turned his attention to the lower stratum of Chinese society and asserted that '[n]o people are, in fact, more superstitious than the common Chinese'.³⁴ He thought that the Chinese philosophy had encouraged

³¹ *Asiatick Researches*, i, 355.

³² George Staunton, *An Authentic Account of An Embassy from the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China*, (3 vols., London, 1797). Staunton's account was not the first publication with regard to the embassy. Æneas Anderson hastily published his story of the embassy in 1795. It is, however, a worthless description if readers wanted to know about the nature of the embassy and Chinese society. The single point worthy of noting is that Anderson refuted the French missionaries' opinion of Chinese women's confinement. He asserted that Chinese women enjoyed 'reasonable liberty'. The Chinese, he argued, enjoyed 'the same communication and social intercourse with women, which in Europe, is considered as a principal charm of social life.' Æneas Anderson, *A Narrative of the British Embassy to China* (Basil, 1795), p. 328. Cranmer-Byng remarks that the only value of Anderson's work lies in its providing readers with information on Chinese cooking for the banquet when the Chinese government received the ambassadors. George Macartney, *Lord Macartney's Observations on China*, pp. 343-4.

³³ Staunton, *Authentic Account of An Embassy*, ii, 298.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 272.

the rise of a patriarchal society which had given fathers a despotic control over their families and households. Also, instead of giving enlightenment, the Chinese philosophy had been resistant to the 'new light of knowledge'.³⁵

Macartney himself kept two journals at the Chinese embassy. One journal, his diary kept during his stay in China, mainly describes his diplomatic service in China and his official dealings with the Chinese government. The other combines his personal observations and reflections on Chinese society based on what he saw. Both these journals were published in 1807 by his protégé, John Barrow, then the Second Secretary to the Admiralty.³⁶ The Chinese sections of the journals, as published by Barrow, were highly selective and were combined with Macartney's writings relevant to his duties as governor of Madras and during his diplomatic service in Russia. It is very likely that prior to publication Barrow chose from Macartney's journals those passages which would best serve his own 'Tory' cause, omitting the majority of the critical comments Macartney made on Chinese society and instead highlighting his political conservatism. In Barrow's edition, Macartney professed that the aim of his public policy in Madras 'has been a safe [rather] than a brilliant government'. Moreover, although Barrow thought that Macartney had been sympathetic to the condition of slaves, he did not 'entertain those enthusiastic notions respecting the abolition of the latter [slave-trade].' Barrow asserted that Macartney 'contended that all great changes, of what nature so ever,

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 115, 335. Grant also expressed the same opinion of Hindus' unfriendly attitude towards new or foreign knowledge. Grant, *Observation*, p. 82.

³⁶ John Barrow, *Some Accounts of the Public Life and a Selection from the Unpublished Writings, of the Earl of Macartney*, (2 vols., London, 1807). For the discussion of the publication of Macartney's journals, see J. L. Cranmer-Byng's 'Introduction' to *An Embassy to China: Being the journal kept by Lord Macartney during his embassy to the Emperor Ch'ien-long 1793-1794*, pp. 38ff.

ought to be gradual, not violent'.³⁷ The enthusiastic abolitionist, Henry Brougham, also a prolific reviewer for the *Edinburgh Review*, severely criticised Barrow's representation of Macartney. Brougham contested that Macartney was a true abolitionist 'who resolved not to allow a single slave ship to enter Cape colony'.³⁸ But, although he realised that Barrow had softened Macartney's representation of Chinese society, Brougham knew fully the effect that Macartney's account of China had in damaging the popular view of the Chinese national character that had been created by the *philosophes*.³⁹ Macartney thought of the Chinese as 'a semi-barbarous people'.

A little before that period the Chinese had reached their highest pitch of civilization ... whilst we have been every day rising in arts and sciences, they are actually become a semi-barbarous people in comparison with the present nations of Europe.⁴⁰

He endorsed Smith's view that Asian society was in a state of stagnation, while North American society was rapidly progressing. When Macartney described the Chinese as 'semi-barbarous', however, he used the term in his own way. He did not simply following the cliché that Chinese society had long been stagnating, but professed that it was, indeed, in regression.

Superstitious and suspicious in their temper they at first appeared shy and apprehensive of us, being full of prejudices against strangers, of whose cunning and ferocity a thousand ridiculous tales had been propagated, and perhaps industriously encouraged by the government, whose political system seems to be to endeavour to persuade the people that they are themselves already perfect and can therefore learn nothing from others; but

³⁷ J. Barrow, *Some Accounts of the Public Life of Macartney*, i, 376, 389.

³⁸ *Edinburgh Review* (Jan. 1808), pp. 307- 8. Brougham went so far as to state brutally that 'Mr Barrow acts unworthy of Lord Macartney's pupil and eulogist'. Perhaps, having in mind similar assaults from Brougham and the *Edinburgh*, Barrow, in a letter to Macvey Napier, bitterly remarked that *Edinburgh Review* 'set the example of personal attack and party rancour.' Letter from John Barrow to Macvey Napier, 17 Nov. 1818, BL. MSS. Add. 34612.

³⁹ *Edinburgh Review*, (Jan. 1808), p. 311.

⁴⁰ George Macartney, *Observations on China*, p. 222. The period to which Macartney referred was the North and South Song dynasties, from the twelfth to fourteenth centuries.

it is to little purpose. A nation that does not advance must retrograde, and finally fall back to barbarism and misery.⁴¹

Macartney was well acquainted with contemporary scholarship in the area.⁴² He was a colleague of Robertson at the Literary Club, and had read the *Disquisition*. In his journal, Macartney apologised for 'not knowing the [Chinese] language'. The apology is reminiscent of Robertson's apology for his ignorance of Indian languages in the *Disquisition*.⁴³ His account of the condition of the Chinese shows his knowledge of eighteenth century moral philosophy and philosophical history. He offered a philosophical view of the reason for which the Chinese crippled their women's feet: it 'might have taken its rise from oriental jealousy, which had always been ingenious in its contrivance for securing the ladies to their owners.'⁴⁴ It is, indeed, a description of Chinese sexual manners in terms comparable to Millar's. More importantly, like Grant, Macartney was aware that social theory and social practice were out of step in China.

Where women are excluded from appearing, all delicacy of taste and sentiment, the softness of address, the graces of elegant converse, the play of passions, the refinements of love and friendship must of course be banished. In their place gross familiarity, coarse pleasantry, and broad allusions are indulged in, but without that honesty and expansion of heart which we have sometimes observed to arise on such occasions among ourselves. Morality is a mere pretence in their practice, though a common topic of their discourse.⁴⁵

The most significant point of Macartney's observations was that they were based on a knowledge of China as well as India. He suggested that justice was not well established

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 226.

⁴² Macartney confessed to Charles Fox that history was 'the best polisher of the manners, and the best introduction to the knowledge of the human heart'. Barrow, *Some Accounts of the Public Life of Macartney* (London, 1807), i, 390-1.

⁴³ Macartney, *Observation on China*, p. 221.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 228.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

in the Orient, as bribery was so prevalent. The defect in the judicial system was, according to Macartney, the key factor in explaining why Asian nations were turbulent and unstable. Macartney remarked,

This infamous system is universal among the Orientals, and is, I conceive, a principal cause of their decay and subversion. All the other great monarchies of the east, which we are acquainted with, have been overturned by it, one after another, and it will probably some day have its share in the catastrophe of China.⁴⁶

Montesquieu conceptually bundled Asia together under the rubric of despotism. Smith had seen Asian society as a single market. Jones had identified the oneness of Asians nations in terms of their linguistic affinity. As a practical statesman, Macartney perceived similar defects in the government and judicial systems of different Asian nations.

The important respect in which Macartney altered British understanding of Chinese society was in his work on Chinese material life. Macartney held that most of the people lived in a miserable and wretched condition, in which moral sentiment was unable to thrive. He provided a possible explanation of the practice of infanticide.

From the misery to which a large proportion of the people are thus exposed (the majority is indeed very wretched in all respects) it is not to be wondered that they should lose every sense but that of self-preservation; that they should forget the other ties of nature, and sell their children without scruple if they find a chapman, and desert them without pity if they don't ... but it should not be made with too much precipitation and severity, for I believe, where the parent has any possible means of supporting his offspring, there is no country where paternal affection is stronger than in China; and it is natural that it should be so, because there is no country where filial respect and gratitude are so strong.⁴⁷

In general, Macartney's testimony might have done much to change public opinion with

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 244-5.

regard to Asian civilisation in general and Chinese society in particular, had his views not been heavily edited by John Barrow. The real influence on British views of Chinese society at the beginning of the nineteenth century was John Barrow himself (1764-1848). Barrow's many-faceted role in British colonial history is under-studied.⁴⁸ In his role as Secretary to the Admiralty, he initiated the Congo expedition in 1815 and the search for the North West Passage. He advised the Tory government to send a second embassy to China in 1812. He proposed establishing a colony at Port Essington in western Australia as 'the second Singapore'. The second embassy to China took place in 1816, but the colony at Port Essington was never realised. Barrow was also often consulted by Joseph Banks for botanical and navigational information, and because of his help in collecting botanical species from China and Africa, he was elected to the Royal Society.⁴⁹ He was also one of the founding members of the Royal Geographical Society.⁵⁰

As far as the present study is concerned, Barrow's literary career is what matters. In his day, Barrow was a well-known writer. In persuading Ricardo to write the famed article on the 'Funding System' for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, James Mill told Ricardo that 'a work which has the names of Dugald Stewart, Playfair, Walter Scott,

⁴⁸ There is only one biography dedicated to Barrow's life, which is unfortunately written to appeal to a general readership and thus lacks any precise references. Christopher Lloyd, *Mr Barrow of the Admiralty: A Life of Sir John Barrow 1764-1848* (London, 1970). There is only a short account devoted to discussing Barrow's Travels of Africa in Pratt's textual interpretation of white men's writings as gazing at colonial Africa and America. Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London, 1992). Nowadays, Barrow is remembered by the public, if at all, as the compiler of *The Mutiny of the Bounty* (reprinted from 1831 edition, Oxford, 1989).

⁴⁹ For a biographical description, see Christopher Lloyd, *Mr Barrow*. Barrow collected botanical species from China for Banks, and helped to transplant Chinese tea bushes to India, which failed in the end. BL Add. MS 32439, 26/Oct/1810 and 34611, 15/Nov/1815. Lloyd, *Mr Barrow*, p. 24.

⁵⁰ For the history of the establishment of the Society, see Hugh Robert Mill, *The Record of the Royal Geographical Society 1830-1930* (London, 1930).

Barrow, &c., can do no discredit to any name'.⁵¹ Barrow published *An Account of Travels into the Interior of Southern Africa* (1801& 1804), *Travels in China* (1805) and *A Voyage to Cochin China* (1806), along with biographies of Anson and Howse. He also contributed several articles concerned with naval affairs, polar seas, Australia, and Chinese customs and languages for Napier's editions of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1814 and 1824). For the *Quarterly Review*, Barrow contributed about one hundred and ninety five articles dealing with world-wide travel and geographical exploration.⁵²

Barrow's major writings on Africa and Capetown were composed in a 'scientific' mode. He analysed the natural resources of the country in terms of men, animals, plants and mines, and discussed the manner in which they could be deployed.⁵³ Barrow proudly asserted that the first chart of Southern Africa with scientific measurements, 'actual observations of latitude and of bearings, estimation of distance, and frequent angular intersections of remarkable points and objects' was ordered by the Earl of Macartney.⁵⁴ Barrow professed that he 'embraced a variety of objects, as well for the scientific inquirer as for promotion of the public benefit'. This convergence of scientific inquiry and public benefit rested on his notion of the importance of fact-gathering.

As facts locally collected, they have been thought worthy to be laid before the public.
The observations and reflections upon the facts are such as occurred when the

⁵¹ *Works and Correspondence of David Ricardo*, ed. Piero Sraffa (11 vols., Cambridge, 1951-73), viii, 58.

⁵² C. Lloyd, *Mr Barrow*, pp. 30, 171. John Barrow, *An Auto-Biographical Memoir of Sir John Barrow*, London, 1847), pp. 504-505. The identification of Barrow's, as with the others', authorship is found in Hill Shine and Helen Chadwick Shine, *The Quarterly Review Under Gifford Identification of Contributors 1809-1824* (Chapel Hill NC, 1949) and *The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals 1824-1900*, ed. Walter E. Houghton (5 vols., London, c.1966-87).

⁵³ Barrow, *An Account of Travels into the Interior of Southern Africa, in the years 1797 and 1798* (London, 1801), i. 9-10 (population), 16 (population and slaves), 24 (vegetables), 43- 44 (mortality), 58-60, 62, 68-9, 72 (plants).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

impression they made, on the spot, was strongest on the mind.⁵⁵

Barrow wrote an eye-witness testimony to the complexity and ample resources of Africa.⁵⁶ He described 'the Cape Peninsula' as Eden-like: 'the natural productions ... are perhaps more numerous, varied, and elegant, than on any other spot of equal extent in the whole world'.⁵⁷ Likewise, in *A Voyage to Cochin China*, Barrow described the luxuriance of the nature in many countries he saw *en route* to China on that embassy with Macartney.

There are not, probably, many spots on the globe which, on the same space, can boast of so rich and varied a fund of vegetable productions as are to be found on the island of Java ... for the grandeur and elegance of their appearance, the beauty and fragrance of their flowers, and the richness and variety of their fruits.⁵⁸

Generally speaking, in describing the material and natural world, Barrow was an empiricist, who paid much more attention to collecting facts than establishing principles or theories to interpret them. For instance, he was very specific when he described the fauna of South-East Asia in *A Voyage to Cochin China*. 'The swallows were of that species which, in the *Systema Naturae*, is called *Esculenta*, from the abundant use made of their nests in Chinese cookery. We found some thousands of these nests attached to the side of cavern, some containing young birds, and other eggs. The nests were of an oval shape, slightly joined to each other at the extremities of the longest diameter'.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 53, 54.

⁵⁶ John Barrow, *A Voyage to Cochin China* (reprinted from 1806 edn., Oxford, 1975), pp. 190-1, 354.

⁵⁷ Barrow, *Travels in Africa*, i, 24. Pratt goes so far as to remark that Barrow's *Travels into Africa* is '400 pages, a strange, highly attenuated kind of narrative that seems to do everything possible to minimize the human presence.' Therefore, 'the territorial colonizing aspirations of Euroimperialism are idealized into the depopulated face of the country.' Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, pp. 59, 81.

⁵⁸ Barrow, *A Voyage to Cochin China*, p. 183.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

Barrow's detailed description was a far cry from the intellectual habit of Scottish philosophical historians. When reviewing this work, Jeffrey remarked that in 'sound sense and sagacity, we are disposed to rank him at least as high as any modern traveller; but he is far from answering our abstract idea of excellence in this department His views are often narrow, and oftener unsound'.⁶⁰ Alexander Murray suggested that a good historian of India needed 'the taste and philosophy of a Hume or a Robertson'.⁶¹ For the Scots, the most important things for them to know about a society were the principles of social manners, and the progress in material conditions and institutions.

Barrow's 'thick description', to use a modern term, of the material world was not value-free, but showed his own concerns with commerce and strategy. His personal observation was evidence that the Chinese were apt to trade with foreigners. 'These cargoes, it appeared, he carried to the island of Timor, where he was met by Chinese traders who, after purchasing the cargoes, transhipped them into their own junks and carried them to the southern ports of China.'⁶² He suggested that the monarch of Cochin China was favourable towards the English and commercial concerns.⁶³ Furthermore, he suggested creating a trading port at Turon in order to trade with China. Indeed, Barrow published an extensive account of Java in his *A Voyage to Cochin China* partly to alert his readers to Napoleon's designs in the East.⁶⁴ This idea of establishing a Turon colony in order to encourage trade with China was hardly an original idea of Barrow's. George

⁶⁰ *Edinburgh Review*, (Oct. 1806), p. 18.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, (Jan. 1805), p. 301.

⁶² Barrow, *A Voyage to Cochin China*, pp. 190-1, 354.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 279-81.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 338-9.

Staunton had suggested it in 1797.⁶⁵ Because of the expansionist and mercantilist implications of Barrow's works, Francis Jeffrey mocked Barrow and his Tory politics: [he] 'never sees a fine country abroad, but he immediately begins to imagine how comfortable it would be, if it belonged to Great Britain'.⁶⁶

None the less, the importance of Barrow's accounts of Asian countries lay in more than the polemical abuse it engendered between the *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly* reviews. Barrow's most important work about Asian civilisation was his *Travels in China* published in 1804. This work gave British readers an unprecedentedly dark picture of Chinese society. This work soon received Jeffrey's attention. In his review of it for the *Edinburgh Review*, Jeffrey described his idea of semi-barbarism.⁶⁷ The reason that Jeffrey praised the work was that it was concerned with ordinary men and women, the lower ranks of society, and social manners and institutions, rather than taking a 'narrow view' of the material world. Like Staunton and Macartney, Barrow asserted that he was to present the Chinese in their proper colours 'not as their own moral maxims would present them, but as they really are'.⁶⁸ Barrow's self-assertion was by no means merely lip-service. In the first edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* of 1771, there are about eight full pages devoted to the entry on China, in which the description of China is almost entirely based on Confucianism. In the edition of 1814, none of the Confucian doctrines are discussed or thought to be the most suitable means of representing Chinese

⁶⁵ George Staunton, *Authentic Account of An Embassy*, i, 421.

⁶⁶ *Edinburgh Review*, (Oct. 1806), p. 17.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, (Jan. 1805), p. 260ff.

⁶⁸ Barrow, *Travels in China* (London, 1804), pp. 3-4.

civilisation.⁶⁹

Barrow's *Travels in China* was designed to present,

the manners, the state of society, the language, literature and fine arts, the sciences and civil institutions, the religious worship and opinions, the population and progress of agriculture, the civil and moral character of the people, as may enable the reader to settle, in his own mind, *the point of rank which China may be considered to hold in the scale of civilized nations*.⁷⁰

Like Montesquieu and Grant, Barrow viewed China as an Oriental civilisation based on the principle of despotism. In comparison with Grant's words, Barrow's argument was, probably, more subtle. For instance, he argued that filial piety in China was

less a moral sentiment, than a precept which by length of time has acquired the efficacy of a positive law; and it may truly be said to exist more in the maxims of the government, than in the minds of the people. ... It gives to the parent the exercise of the same unlimited and arbitrary power over his children, that the Emperor, the common father, possesses by law over his people.⁷¹

Barrow's account of Chinese social manners was echoing Montesquieu's and Millar's theoretical approach to history of manners and jurisprudence. Perhaps, because of the intellectual affinity, the writers of the late Scottish Enlightenment, such Jeffrey, approved this work, and regarded it as a good text for understanding Chinese society. Like Alexander, Barrow held that the status of women was the best indicator of the progress of civilisation. He observed that among the ordinary people in China women were treated indecently and wretchedly.

... the condition of the female part of society in any nation will furnish a tolerable just criterion of the degree of civilization to which that nation has arrived. ... The Chinese, if possible, have imposed on their women a greater degree of humility and restraint than

⁶⁹ It is also worth noting that the entry for India and Hindu contains little more than a half page in the edition of 1771. In the edition of 1824, it extends to more than ten pages.

⁷⁰ Barrow, *Travels in China*, pp. 3-4. Emphasis in original.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 143-4.

the Greeks of old, or the Europeans in the dark ages. ... many being obliged to work with an infant upon their back, while the husband, in all possibility, is gaming, or otherwise idling away his time. ... Even at home, in her own family, a woman must neither eat at the same table, nor sit in the same room with her husband.⁷²

The new texts on China, like those on India, focusing as they did on the lower ranks of society and the history of manners, were to be quickly assimilated into the Scottish theories of history and civilisation, for they were intellectually in affinity with Montesquieu's, Smith's, and Millar's general concerns with stadial history or with the different types of social manners in different ages. John Adams tried to combine the history of manners with religious doctrine to show that human social activities were in line with the Creator's plan.

Light is intended by our Maker for action, and darkness for rest. In the fourteenth century, the shops in Paris were opened at four in the morning; at present a shopkeeper is scarce awake at seven. ... as if there were a tendency, in polite nations, of converting night into day, and day into night. ... Formerly active exercises prevailed among the robust and plain people. The milder pleasures of society prevail as manners refine. Hence it is, that candle-light amusements are now fashionable in France, and in other polished countries ...⁷³

Similarly, Staunton was able to view the Chinese government, and the stage of its civilisation, while describing the British embassy waiting for the Chinese emperor's procession and reception at Zhe-hol, or Jehol, through Scottish philosophical eyes.⁷⁴

This hour [five o'clock in the morning] of meeting, so different from that of nations which had passed through the various stages of civilization, to the period of indolence and luxury, brought back to recollection the usual hunting occupation of this people, whose daily chase began as soon as the rising sun enabled them to perceive and pursue their prey.⁷⁵

⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 138, 140-2.

⁷³ John Adams, *Curious Thoughts on the History of Man*, pp. 64-5.

⁷⁴ It was the Manchu emperors' winter palace, located beyond the Great Wall.

⁷⁵ Staunton, *Authentic Account of An Embassy*, iii, 33.

It was an account of a civilisation little more advanced than a barbarous society and even in a state of regression. It is important not to overstate the British perception of the regression in Asia. It is evident, however, that these new texts on Asian societies had a great impact on public opinion.

Theorists of the nineteenth century were to integrate the new texts into theoretical interests that were distinct from those of last century. McCulloch's edition of the *Wealth of Nations* throws important light on the changing nature of these preoccupations. McCulloch consciously edited Smith's influential work in the context of the post-French Revolution age. He was also able to integrate the new texts discussed above into Smith's work. McCulloch stated that his editorial purpose was 'to point out the more prominent changes that have occurred in the laws, institutions, and circumstances' after the author, Smith, had edited his own work for the last time in 1787.⁷⁶

The extraordinary changes occasioned by the late war in every department of the public economy, deeply affected the interests of all classes, and created the most anxious and universal attention. The experience of centuries was crowded into the short space of thirty years; and while novel combinations of circumstances served as tests by which to try existing theories, they enabled even inferior writers to extend the boundaries of the science, and to become the discoverers of new truths.⁷⁷

One of the conspicuous corrections that McCulloch made for the *Wealth of Nations* was information about the social and economical condition of Asia. For instance, at variance with Smith's assertion that 'China is much richer country than any part of Europe', McCulloch noted,

⁷⁶ J. P. McCulloch, Preface to 1828 Edition of Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*. The edition I currently use is that published in 1863. Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, ed. McCulloch (Edinburgh, 1863). Hereafter called as McCulloch's edition of *The Wealth of Nations*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. liii-iv. See also Biancamaria Fontana, *Rethinking the Politics of Commercial Society: the Edinburgh Review 1802- 1832* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 73.

Later and better authenticated accounts show that China, instead of being a rich, is really a poor ill-cultivated country. The population is exceedingly redundant; and poverty and misery prevail to an extent unknown any where in Europe, with the exception of Ireland.⁷⁸

Smith also asserted that Ancient Egypt as well as modern China was rich, but that neither engaged in foreign commerce. McCulloch corrected the statement and remarked that the Chinese were 'eminently commercial'. They 'carried intercourse in ships and emigrated to the whole Eastern Archipelago'.⁷⁹ Methodologically, McCulloch wanted to point out the changes of historical experience and facts to prove the superiority of Ricardo's geometrical theory of political economy. 'A more scientific treatise, like that of Ricardo, is in great measure independent of the changes that occur in the progress of society. But this is not the case with the work of Adam Smith.'⁸⁰

Likewise, James Mill was to react to the new historical experiences and texts relating to Asia after 1789 in his *History of British India*. He also tended to premise his analysis of Indian society on an idea of universal historical progress. Because of this a-historical preoccupation, Mill's *History* has been often criticised as an example of the *a priori* method. Mill, as well as McCulloch, belonged to the generation who sought for methodological models in order to establish their analyses of society on grounds 'independent' of historical changes, because, paradoxically, they had witnessed turbulent historical events in Europe and other areas. All the new texts discussed above had altered the favourable image of Indian and Chinese societies to a considerable degree. James Mill's *History* was both to rationalise and theorise the new image of Indian or Asian

⁷⁸ McCulloch's edition of *The Wealth of Nations*, p. 87n.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 219n.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, Preface.

society.

Nevertheless, James Mill's career in writing the *History* overlaps with his other literary career of writing for the *Edinburgh Review*, founded in 1802. The journal provided not only a means of popularising the intellectual achievement of the Scottish Enlightenment, but also a forum for discussing Asian societies. Above all, it represented a Whig view of British government in India. At the same time, Mill's *History* was not only an intellectual exercise concerning what he had learnt from the enlightenment movement, but also concerned the practical needs of reform in India. Thus, he was also consciously working on the *History* in order to react to the polemical opinions of the *Edinburgh*. This will be the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

THE *EDINBURGH REVIEW* (1802-1818) AND JAMES MILL

i. The *Edinburgh Review* and Philosophical History

During the time in which James Mill composed the *History of British India* from 1806 to 1818, he frequently contributed book review articles for journals. Among these, the *Edinburgh Review* (1802-1829) was the most important medium through which Mill presented his view of history and Asian society. The importance of the *Edinburgh Review* in relation to the present study has several aspects. First, the journal was far more powerful in shaping public opinion than any other journal of its kind, with the exception of its rival, the *Quarterly Review* (1809-1967). Traditional journals, such as the *Monthly Review* and the *Critical Review*, were monthly periodicals and, thus allowed limited space for the reviewers to present their personal opinions and argumentation. The average length of an article in the traditional journals was about three pages. The *Edinburgh Review* was, in contrast, the first quarterly periodical. It offered reviewers generally twenty or even more pages for the reviewers to present their opinions and arguments. The importance of the quarterly journals in the first half of the nineteenth century was evident, and their sales spoke for themselves. In 1810, the *Edinburgh* had an annual sale of 13,000.¹ Graham concluded that the *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly Reviews*

¹ John Gross, *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters* (Harmondsworth, 1991), p. 12. For a general discussion of the *Edinburgh Review*, see John Clive, *Scotch Reviewers: The Edinburgh Review, 1802-1815* (London, 1957).

‘dominated the nineteenth century. Their religious, political, and critical opinions found assent in the minds of thousands of readers.’²

Second, the *Edinburgh* plays an important part in the present study because many of its founders and frequent contributors, Francis Jeffrey, Sydney Smith (1771-1845), Francis Horner (1778-1817), Henry Brougham (1778-1868) and James Mill himself were Dugald Stewart’s students. In one way or another, they shared Stewart’s philosophical, historical and political outlook. For Henry Cockburn, they ‘formed a distinct and marked set, distinguished by their reputations, their Whiggism, and their strong mutual coherence’.³ The *Edinburgh*, according to Carlyle, was the most ‘respectable vehicle for any British man’s speculation’.⁴ Jeffrey and his reviewers were proud to have ‘philosophical history’ as the trade-mark of the *Edinburgh* and to apply it to the study of Oriental societies. Though an admirer of William Jones, Jeffrey regretted that Jones, while ‘a great scholar in the southern part of the island’, could not be considered a philosophical writer in the North. ‘Our Scot[t]ish prejudices lead us irresistibly to believe, that he was a little spoiled by the classical and metrical discipline of English schools and universities’.⁵

Moreover, the reviewers’ formative years were spent not only studying in Stewart’s classes, but were also influenced by the Napoleonic Wars. The post-revolutionary age made them not only optimistic about reforming political society and desirous of

² Walter Graham, *English Literary Periodicals* (New York, 1930), p. 245.

³ Quoted from Donald Winch, ‘The system of the North’, p. 25. See also Henry Cockburn, *Memorial of His Time* (Edinburgh, 1856), p. 41.

⁴ Joanne Shattock, *Politics and Reviewers: The Edinburgh and the Quarterly in the early Victorian Age* (Leicester, 1989), p. 38.

⁵ *Edinburgh Review* (Jan. 1805), p. 331.

civilising other societies, but also more sensitive about national sentiments. Unlike Hume's generation, whose attitude toward the non-European world was much coloured by a cosmopolitan spirit, the Edinburgh Whigs of the age held a comparatively aggressive attitude towards the problem of civilising some non-European societies. At least, being faced with the rapid changes of societies and politics, the new generation of Scots grown up in the 1790s had an ambivalent attitude toward civilising non-European societies. Jeffrey described, in a sarcastic tone, the French as modern 'crusaders' and 'civilising Coptic disciples'.⁶ Likewise, James Mill described Napoleon's conquests within and without Europe as 'benevolent plans of the French emperor for the improvement and happiness of the human race'.⁷ Sydney Smith, an Englishman who sojourned in Edinburgh for quite a long time in at the turn of nineteenth century and was a co-founder of the *Edinburgh Review*, concisely pointed out the paradoxical relationship of European civilisation and non-European societies. In describing African societies, Smith followed Scottish philosophical history and said that 'With a number of little independent hordes, civilization is impossible.' 'When mankind are prevented from daily quarrelling and fighting, they first begin to improve; and all this, we are afraid, is only to be accomplished in the first instance, by some great conqueror. ... The ex-Emperor of the French would ... be an eminent benefactor to the human race.'⁸ If the British felt ambivalent towards Napoleon's civilising mission in the post-French

⁶ *Ibid.*, (Jan. 1803), p. 332.

⁷ *Ibid.*, (July 1812), p. 52. It is worth noting that Mill was neither a radical nor a Jacobin before he contributed articles to the journal. In 1802, he became editor of *Anti-Jacobin Review*. He even joined a volunteering force against Napoleon. 'I have been a volunteer these six months, and I am now a very complete soldier.' Alexander Bain, *James Mill*, pp. 41, 49.

⁸ Sydney Smith, 'Mission to Ashantee', 32 (Oct. 1819), p. 399.

revolutionary wars, their political opinions were, to be sure, strongly coloured by dislike of the French and strong opinions about national character. Henry Dundas cried out ‘I hate Jacobinism everywhere’. And for unclear reasons, Jeffrey exclaimed that ‘I had always a profound contempt for the Chinese’.⁹ Being faced with Napoleonic imperialism, the young generation of reviewers had an ambivalent attitude towards the complicated problems of governing India, defending Britain from Napoleon’s despotism and dealing with another imperial country, China. It was within this national and international context that James Mill, with his strong commitment to Indian society and other non-European societies, reacted and composed his *History*.

Last, the *Edinburgh Review* is crucial for the present study because it provides a forum for a controversial discussion of the problems of Indian society and Hinduism, which attracted many contributions and great public interest. Following William Jones’s legacy of promoting the study of Hindu mythology as a key to the understanding of history, Hamilton developed the Jonesian and Robertsonian views of the highly developed ancient Hindu civilisation in the *Edinburgh*. At the same time, Hamilton went so far as to suggest that Hinduism presented a much higher state of civilisation than Islam, an opinion that Jones and Robertson did not entertain. Hamilton’s views of Hindu institutions were used by people like Hamilton’s friend, Lawrence Campbell, to justify Wellesley’s plans for conquering and establishing imperial government in India. By transforming the Jonesian legacy, the *Edinburgh Review* promoted a cultural ideology of Muslim inferiority to Hindu civilisation. This was the ideology that Mill tried to attack,

⁹ Dundas’s words are quoted from David Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance*, p. 129 and Jeffrey’s from John Clive, *Scotch Reviewers*, p. 168n, or Henry Cockburn, *Life of Jeffrey* (2 vols., London, 1856), ii, 93.

and the backdrop against which he stubbornly and painstakingly tried to prove that all Asian nations were equal in terms of their achievements on the scale of civilisation, which could be described as 'semi-barbarism'. Because of his radical support of the Benthamite cause and the 'anti-aristocratic position',¹⁰ Mill was not trusted by Jeffrey, and after 1811, Mill was virtually 'excommunicated' from the Whiggish *Review*. Asian or Indian politics played its part in shaping the battle between the philosophical Whigs and the philosophical radical, James Mill. The battlefield for the contest between them was, first, the *Edinburgh Review*, and then the *History of British India*.

ii. Jeffrey on Asian civilisation

Jeffrey's view of Asian societies was in line with Montesquieu, Smith and Millar. From 1802 to his retirement from the editorship of the *Edinburgh* in 1829, Jeffrey published six major review articles related to Asian societies.¹¹ Jeffrey's importance, for the present study, turned on the fact that he was an influential and popular writer of the late Scottish Enlightenment who challenged the notion of high achievement of civilisation of Chinese society. Also, Jeffrey later described Asian societies as being semi-barbarous. James Mill was very much encouraged by Jeffrey's re-evaluation of Chinese society. In the *History of British India*, Chinese society was discussed as a good example of an

¹⁰ Donald Winch, 'The cause of good government: Philosophic Whigs v. Philosophic Radicals', *That Noble Science of Politics* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 91-126; pp. 96-7.

¹¹ Three of them are on India: 'Malcolm's *Central India*' (July 1824), 'Sketches of India' (Oct. 1824) and 'Bishop Heber's Journal of India' (Dec. 1828). Two are on China: 'Barrow's *Travels in China*' (Jan. 1805) and 'The Penal Code of China' (Aug. 1810). One is of Persia: 'Memoir of the Emperor Baber' (June 1827).

Asian semi-barbarous society; and India was claimed to be its equal. Mill tried to develop Jeffrey's idea of semi-barbarism, by comparing Indian society with the Chinese, along with some other Asian and American empires. Indeed, change in the Scottish image of Asian society started in the 1790s. But the *Edinburgh Review* gave it a theoretical and polemical weight.

Jeffrey followed the critique of Asian societies created by Macartney, Staunton and John Barrow, but combined them with a Scottish philosophical bent. In a review article on Barrow's *Travels in China*, in 1805, Jeffrey lauded the author: 'This book appears to us to be the most candid and judicious, though not perhaps the most learned or elaborate, account of the Chinese nation that has yet been laid before the public.'¹² For Jeffrey, travel writings should give readers an overall philosophical view of the country and its civilisation:

it seems to have been the object of Mr Barrow rather to systematize and appretiate the facts of which we were previously in possession, than to add materially to their number ... Mr Barrow's book is rather to be considered as a moral and political estimate of the Chinese character, than an account of his travels ... he conceives the store of facts which has been already collected to be nearly sufficient to settle our opinion upon those subjects; and that he proposes, now that the public curiosity has been gratified by an ample narrative of all that has been observed in the country, to point out the conclusions to which these observations should conduct us, and to solve the problems.¹³ [emphasis added]

Facts were to be valued in relation to their conformity to human nature. To some extent, Barrow's work on China had a great influence in British society, and this is because Jeffrey viewed it through his Scottish philosophical eyes and propagated it in the *Edinburgh*. Opposing Jones' rhetorical approach to the study of Asian society, Jeffrey

¹² *Edinburgh Review*, (Jan. 1805), p. 259.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 259-60.

thought that knowledge of a society was only appreciated when it was able to help readers to understand that society.

... we do not feel quite so well assured of the extent of his *philosophical* capacity ... or of his familiarity with those general principles which lead to great and simple discoveries, and bind together, into one useful whole, the particulars of our miscellaneous knowledge. His studies and pursuits were principally directed to particulars.¹⁴

In line with the confidence of the Scottish philosophical approach to studying society, and as a pupil of Millar, Jeffrey agreed with Barrow that the condition of women in a society was a good criterion of its degree of civilisation. He viewed China particularly with a concern for social manners and jurisprudence in respect to women. He drew readers' attention to 'the seclusion and neglect of women', and went so far as to maintain that this allowed the philosopher to establish the character of Chinese society as a whole.¹⁵ William Alexander had expressed the view that the better women were treated the more civilised the society was. Like Alexander, Jeffrey did not treat the mode of subsistence, but the indicators of manners, such as women's slavery or confinement, as the marks of civilisational progress. Jeffrey's view of civilisation was much more idealist than his eighteenth century's predecessors. His rejection of the materialist interpretation of civilisation was understandable in the aftermath of the French Revolution. This could be found in his strong polemic against phrenology, and particularly its implication of a materialist explanation of human morality.¹⁶

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 331.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 271.

¹⁶ *The Edinburgh Review* was a strong opponent of the theoretical implications of phrenology to morality. John Gordon's criticism of phrenology appeared in the journal in 1815, and was in line with the sociological and anthropological thought of the Scottish Enlightenment. He thought that man is a social being and, thus, influenced and created by external circumstances, such as society, wants, climate, mode of living and education, not by an innate nature. *Edinburgh Review*, (June 1815), p. 231. Jeffrey did not differ

Jeffrey was also so appalled by the practice of ‘compressing and mutilating the feet of the women’ that he even felt disgusted in reading Barrow’s description of ‘the personal economy of this refined people’.¹⁷ He described a chief courtier’s apartment in the imperial residence at Gehol as ‘fitter for the habitation of hogs than of human beings’.¹⁸ He uncompromisingly, even playfully, remarked on the Chinese language:

This language consists of no more than 341 indeclinable monosyllables, which, ... may be increased by a native Chinese to about 1300. This pitiful number of words constitutes the whole vocabulary of this enlightened empire! ... There is no instance, we believe, on the face of the earth, of a language so extremely imperfect and inartificial; and it is difficult to conceive how any race of people could be so stupid, or so destitute of invention, as to leave it in such a state of poverty.¹⁹

Furthermore, Jeffrey had a low opinion of Chinese medicine, astronomy, and agriculture, among many other subdivisions of culture: ‘Of the *sciences* and *arts* of the Chinese, it is unnecessary to say any thing. They have no science, and never seem to have had any.’²⁰ He agreed with William Jones that Chinese ‘philosophy seems yet in so rude a state, as

from the enlightenment doctrine of man and society. He, however, emphatically attacked materialism or fatalism in human studies. Jeffrey criticised George Combe, a leading British phrenologist in the early nineteenth century at Edinburgh, who suggested ‘national characters as individual behaviours, had something to do with craniology’. *Edinburgh Review*, (Sep. 1826), p. 274. It is said that after Gorden’s caricature of phrenology, the books of this subject were greatly damaged in sales, and did not revive until four years later. The event did not only demonstrate the power of the journal in shaping public opinion, but also the general distrust of materialism in the post-French Revolution age. George Combe, *Letter from George Combe to Francis Jeffrey in Answer to his Criticism on Phrenology* (Edinburgh, 1826), p.2. In order to change public opinion, the Scottish phrenologists found themselves having to persuade the Church to patronise their studies in relation to their mission. Anonymous, ‘Essay on the Phrenological Causes of the Different Degrees of Liberty Enjoyed by Different Nations’, *An Appeal to All Classes of the Subjects of Church Patronage in Scotland with a Plan for Amendment* (Glasgow, 1824). Such a form of materialism or physical determinism gained its momentum in the second half of the nineteenth century with the development of physiological anthropology. Consciously standing in opposition to physical determinism, Jeffrey, like James Mill and many other *Edinburgh* reviewers, was more idealistic in his outlook on the human condition and improvement of society, than his eighteenth century precursors.

¹⁷ *Edinburgh Review*, (Jan. 1805) p. 267.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 269.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 279-80.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 281.

hardly to deserve the appellation'.²¹ After summarising and criticising all of the important aspects of Chinese civilisation, Jeffrey described the Chinese as 'half-civilised' or 'semi-barbarous'.²²

iii. Jeffrey's idea of semi-barbarism

Although Jeffrey did not have any specific theoretical notion in mind in giving the appellation of 'semi-barbarism' to Asian society, it would be premature to say that his description was absolutely arbitrary. Jeffrey certainly knew that according to the average British mind, semi-barbarous society could be easily located between the barbarous or savage society of Africa and civilised society of Europe. Moreover, Jeffrey, well acquainted with Scottish philosophical history, tended to give a pseudo-philosophical meaning to it. In his review of the *Penal Code of China* (1810), translated by George Staunton the younger, Jeffrey took up Montesquieu's theme of Oriental despotism in Asian societies. But Jeffrey's main point was to give a historical dimension to jurisdictional institutions. For Jeffrey, legal evolution went hand in hand with civilisational progress. The Scottish Enlightenment had paid great attention to historical jurisprudence. Kames had suggested that in the early stage of society laws were more severe or rigid than they were in the later stage of society. Kames praised the mildness of Chinese law as being an embodiment of the highest stage of commercial society.²³ Jeffrey agreed with Kames' philosophy of legal evolution, but still described China as an Oriental despotism. Jeffrey observed that Chinese criminal laws were so detailed that

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 283.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 262, 272.

²³ Kames, *Sketches of the History of Man*, i, 224-5.

they even forbade marriage for a certain period of time after a parent's death. Oxen could only be slaughtered with the permission of a magistrate. Jeffrey employed a three-stage theory to position China in the scale of legal evolution:

The first efforts of legislation, in all countries, are very short and general; and consist, for the most part, in little else than the brief and authoritative enunciation of some of the great and obvious maxims of morality, or some of the established usages to which the society had previously conformed. ... When society has advanced a little, however, and governments have become strong, the legislator takes a much more ambitious aim. ... he represses irregularities, merely in order to realize an ideal notion of perfection, and labours to subject the whole frame of human society to a law of uniformity and subordination, under which it is not calculated to flourish. ... Having uppermost in their thoughts the dangers of a tumultuary and uncontrouled state of society, they set a most exaggerated value on coercive regulations; and, forgetting altogether both the suffering and the debasement that was to result from the destruction of individual freedom, thought of nothing but of enforcing and reducing to practice their own schemes of permanent controul and complete superintendence. ... To this source, we conceive, are to be referred the institution of *castes* in India and in ancient Egypt ... a great part of the military array of the feudal system. ... As real civilization advanced, however, this controul was felt to be both grievous and unnecessary: a more liberal system was gradually introduced: and, wherever human intellect expanded, and national prosperity rose high, the bands of this barbaric regularity were burst asunder – members of a truly well regulated state were left to a freedom which appeared frightful and pernicious to the keepers of a half-tamed generation - and men were restored to every degree of independence that did not manifestly endanger the safety of their neighbours.²⁴

Jeffrey concluded that the Chinese code of laws resembled the 'the same blind love of regularity'.

The historical significance of Jeffrey's description of semi-barbarism rests on the fact that it was a common-sense form of language used to represent a non-materialist version of the stadial theory. In Jeffrey's opinion stadial history was not based on mode of subsistence or ownership of property. In Jeffrey's mind, civilisation was measured by human institutions or social manners, whereas the eighteenth-century Scots thought that civilisational patterns determined or shaped institutions and manners. The tri-stadial

²⁴ *Edinburgh Review*, (Aug. 1810), pp. 484-6.

theory of civilisation - savage or barbarous, half-barbarous or half-civilised and civilised - had been advanced in the eighteenth century. William Alexander described Muslim society as 'half civilized people'. Macartney described China as 'a semi-barbarous people in comparison with the present nations of Europe'.²⁵ In the late eighteenth century, the term 'half-civilised' seemed to be a common expression referring to Asia or to European feudal society. C. B. Wadstrom published *An Essay on Colonization* in 1794. He described the Africans as 'more sensible of disrespect, contempt, or injury, and are more prompt and violent in resenting them'. 'The same', he further remarked, 'may be observed in half-civilized nations, as in the days of chivalry'.²⁶ Nonetheless, in comparison with the common-sense descriptions of the half-civilised by Alexander, Macartney and some others, Jeffrey based his notion of semi-barbarism on the concept of legal evolution. The anarchist's or individualist's freedom meant the absence of justice and laws. This was the stage of the savage. The emphasis on rigidity and excessive regularity of laws meant the appearance of government. But this also implied the absence of enlightened liberty. Individual citizens re-emerged from the strict confinement of laws and gained personal independence as the society moved further from the threat of frequent outlaws or wrongdoings. The advancement of civil liberty was identified by Jeffrey as 'real civilization', while the fear of social disorder embodied in the extraordinary rigidity of jurisdiction and punishment was a symptom of 'semi-barbarous' society. Jeffrey's notion of legal evolution was, indeed, consciously giving a temporal dimension to Montesquieu's typological idea of Oriental despotism. From the

²⁵ William Alexander, *History of Women*, i. 276. Macartney, *Observations on China*, p. 222.

²⁶ Quoted from *The Critical Review*, 13 (Feb. 1795), p. 145.

viewpoint of legal evolution, Chinese society was thought of as in the middle rank of human civilisation.

Now, this extraordinary minuteness and oppressive interference with the freedom of private conduct, is not to be considered merely as arising from that passion for governing too much, which is apt to infest all persons in possession of absolute power; but appears to us to indicate a certain stage in the progress of society, and to belong to a period of civilization, beyond which the Chinese have not yet been permitted to advance'.²⁷

James Mill accepted Jeffrey's account of the relationship between legal evolution and civilisational achievement. More importantly, as will be fully discussed in the next chapter, Mill further developed Jeffrey's idea of semi-barbarism into a comparative study of Asian societies.

In addition, Jeffrey's critiques of Asian, and particularly Chinese, civilisational achievement influenced James Mill in other respects. First, Jeffrey showed Mill how to engage in indirect cultural or social criticism. When James Mill in his *History* severely attacked both the British government in India and Indian society, he had in mind British society and government at home as the real target. Indeed, it is evident that Jeffrey knew the artifice of attacking one while aiming at another. Jeffrey certainly meant to use the case of Chinese jurisprudence to combat Bentham's policy for systematic reform. Smith and Millar had suggested that when a perfect legal institution was impossible, the legislator had to make^{do} with the second best and with merely acceptable laws. Smith's anti-systematic spirit was fully appreciated by Jeffrey. In reviewing Chinese penal laws, Jeffrey, indeed, had a different target in mind.

It is not a little remarkable, however, that this exact adaptation of pains to offences, which, we have seen, is always attempted in ignorant, and abandoned in enlightened times, is very zealously recommended by no less a person than Mr Bentham, in his

²⁷ *Edinburgh Review*, (Aug. 1810)., p. 484.

Principes de Legislation, edited by M. Dumont, - and that he even makes the want of it one of the most serious charges against the present system of jurisprudence in most of the European nations.²⁸

It is evident that Jeffrey's attack on China was really targeted against despotism and the systematic approach to legislative reform.

Further, Jeffrey's criticism of Chinese society gave Mill encouragement that Asian civilisation as a whole should be described as semi-barbaric. As Ricardo had correctly pointed out, though it has been curiously neglected by many modern scholars, Chinese society, along with many other Asian societies, was an important element in Mill's *History of British India*. As will be argued, Mill's *History* should be viewed as a wholesale criticism of Asian society, as he claimed that all the principal nations of Asia shared the very same state of civilisation. Jeffrey's devaluation of Chinese institutions bolstered Mill's wholesale criticism of Asian social lives and institutions.

iv. Jeffrey and the Jonesian legacy

James Mill followed some of Jeffrey's criticisms of Asian societies; but he also disagreed with Jeffrey on the important point that the British should not be too enthusiastic about administrative and social reform in India. Though Jeffrey believed that Indian society was, in comparison to European society, backward and despotic, he was nevertheless much more favourably disposed to it than he was to China. He and Alexander Hamilton, a Sanskrit expert and later Professor of Hindi at Haileybury, were in the *Edinburgh* to shape a moderate or conservative imperialist view of the governance of India. Jeffrey compared the backwardness of the legal systems of China and India. 'In

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 487.

China, the legislator thought he went far enough, when he specified the precise penalty for tearing off two *tse* [bushes] of hair, or for throwing filth and ordure on another. The Hindu, however, has had the precaution to provide an appropriate rate of punishment for the offence of throwing *the wax of the ears*, or the *parings of the nails* at one's neighbour.'²⁹ But, in Jeffrey's mind, India was different from China and other Asian countries. It was an important 'colony' of the British, and it had been a great store of knowledge for the British in the eighteenth century.

Jeffrey had long been interested in national characters and mythology and, influenced by Stewart's lectures on philosophical history at the University, as well as by his friend Alexander Hamilton (1762-1824). Hamilton was an Orientalist who had returned from serving in the Indian army and joined Jeffrey's club of men of letters, when he turned his attention to the imaginative idea of India.³⁰ Jeffrey's first speech to the Speculative Society had been on the subject of national character.³¹ He also planned to observe the people, the women and customs in Germany with Hamilton.³² Jeffrey himself was interested in literature, particularly poetry. He shared Walter Scott's sentiment about the loss of the Scottish past.³³ His ambivalent attitude towards urban society made him sympathetic to the mythological India that William Jones and Alexander Hamilton conveyed to him. Hamilton promoted a study combining Indian languages and philosophical history, which was indeed, an intellectual marriage of

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 486. Italics original.

³⁰ Hamilton himself attended Alexander Fraser Tytler's course on the history of civilisation. Jane Rendall, 'Scottish Orientalism from William Robertson to James Mill', p. 45.

³¹ Henry Cockburn, *Life of Lord Jeffrey*, i, 56.

³² Cockburn, *Life of Jeffrey*, i, 78 and passim.

³³ N. T. Phillipson, *The Scottish Whigs and the Reform of the Court of Session 1785-1830* (Edinburgh, 1990), p. 41.

Jonesian scholarship with Humean or Robertsonian historiography. He believed that mythological history could be usefully interpreted:

History, considered in a philosophical view, is chiefly conversant with the manners, opinions and circumstances, public and private, of individuals united in society. ... In our endeavours to rend the mysterious veil which ages have drawn between us and the nations of high antiquity, we are justified in expecting to trace moral combinations hitherto unremarked, political institutions unknown, and man acting under the influence of opinions and circumstances, to which we have not before seen him subjected.³⁴

In reviewing Southey's *Thalaba the Destroyer*, Jeffrey professed: 'there is always a certain pleasure in contemplating the *costume* of a distant nation, and the luxuriant landscape of an Asiatic climate.'³⁵ In early nineteenth-century Britain, it was India, not China, that kindled the imagination of the Scottish men of letters.³⁶ On the other hand, James Mill did not think that mythology itself contained any truth of history, or was worth being studied.

With Hamilton, Jeffrey was also responsible for creating the Jonesian legacy in the *Edinburgh*. In a review of the *Life of Sir William Jones*, published by John Shore, Lord Teignmouth, in 1835, Jeffrey clearly intended to promote Whig views of India. He

³⁴ *Edinburgh Review*, (May 1820), pp. 440-1.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, (Oct. 1802), p. 78.

³⁶ Hamilton played an important part in disseminating knowledge of Indian literature to the British. He was a founder member of Jones's Asiatick Society at Calcutta, and became an expert on Sanskrit after returning to Edinburgh in 1796. He became a close friend of Jeffrey who called him 'my little excellent Sanscrit Hamilton', and gave him texts both on India and other Asian countries to review for the *Edinburgh Review*. Hamilton's attitude to India and Indian knowledge was, to a considerable extent, identical with Jones's. He admired *Asiatick Researches* as it 'has darted a rapid glance over the vast unknown terrain of the Indian Archipelago, Tibet and Hindostan.' *Ibid.*, (Oct. 1802), pp. 26-7. Like William Jones, Hamilton suggested that the study of ancient mythology could help people to understand history as it 'comprises the scanty but solitary monuments of the opinions of primeval ages'. *Ibid.*, (April. 1808), p. 37. As with Jones, mythology and comparative linguistics were Hamilton's favourite study. For Hamilton's career and his intellectual affinity with Jones, see Rosane Rocher, *Alexander Hamilton (1762-1824): A Chapter in the early History of Sanskrit Philology* (New Haven, 1968); particularly pp. 35, 41-3, 116.

assured his readers that 'Sir William Jones's politics were those of a decided Whig'.³⁷ He also assured his readers that Jones exerted his talent with and knowledge of Oriental languages to benefit both the British government and its Indian subjects.

His [Jones's] skill in the idioms of India, Persia, and Arabia, has perhaps never been equalled by any European ... By his knowledge of the Sanscrit and Arabic, he was eminently qualified to promote the administration of justice in the Supreme Court, by detecting misrepresentations of the Hindu or Mahomedan laws, ... Of his studies in general it may be observed, that the end which he always had in view, was practical utility; that knowledge was not accumulated by him as a source of mere intellectual recreation, or to gratify an idle curiosity, or for the idler purpose of ostentatiously displaying his acquisitions. To render himself useful to his country and mankind, and to promote the prosperity of both, were the primary and permanent motives of his indefatigable exertions in acquiring knowledge.³⁸

By linking Jones firmly with the Whiggish cause, Jeffrey created a Whig legacy on how to govern India - one which positioned scholarship as a key part of the virtue of a statesman and thus made acquisition of Indian languages indispensable to ruling over India. Specifically, British rulers had to be able to detect faults in the interpretation of Asian laws. The point in John Shore's and Jeffrey's statements was that India should be governed in an Asian idiom. This legacy implied an ideal type of British ruler in India. These rulers must be, at once, statesmen and Orientalists. It implied the need for professionalism in governing India as well as a belief in the impracticality of imposing direct British government on India. These implications became increasingly intriguing and complicated in the next ten years with particular respect to the British attempts at administrative reform in India.

James Mill agreed with Jeffrey's Whig view of India to the extent that knowledge and government were complementary. Mill's views and concerns as regards society

³⁷ *Edinburgh Review*, (Jan. 1805), p. 340.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 344.

were, however, oriented toward utility. He was not interested in comparative studies of languages and detested mythology. Thus, while many British men of letters were attracted by Sanskrit, the origin of Indo-European languages and Hindu mythology, Mill was not interested in the uniqueness of Indian or Hindu culture and society. Instead, Mill was particularly interested in the universality of civilisation. He chiefly desired to find a valid criterion by which to judge the advancement or backwardness of civilisation, in order to do something with a given society. Practical concerns lead Mill not only to follow Stewart in rejecting Jones's views on the unique antiquity and character of Sanskrit, but also to distrust mythology as a source of useful knowledge. Above all, a controversy over Hindu and Islamic cultural superiority centralised around the *Edinburgh Review* and this rivalry exacerbated Mill's impatience with those who believed in the uniqueness and attractiveness of Hinduism.

v. The Jonesian legacy in the debate over the relative merits of Hinduism and Islam

The controversy over whether Hinduism should be considered superior to Islam arose from a practical concern over the extent to which the British should be involved in military actions in India. In the eighteenth century, few Orientalists had distinguished between Islamic and Hindu peoples. Jones praised Persian verses and Hindu mythology equally highly. Hindu Pundits and Muslim Maulvis were indiscriminately consulted by Jones. Likewise, Robertson lauded Akbar as a great conqueror in India and preserver of Indian society, who encouraged a tolerant policy and commerce. In Robertson's interpretation of history, the Muslim conquerors were unlike the Gothic barbarians who

rode on horses and destroyed the civilised Romans. Only Alexander Dow expressed and emphasised the usefulness of the Hindu national character, which might separate the Hindus from the Muslims in terms of commercial and manufacturing achievements.

Mild, humane, obedient, and industrious, they [Hindus] are of all nations on earth the most easily conquered and governed. ... Their governors encourage industry and commerce; and it is to the ingenuity of the Hindoos, we owe all the fine manufactures in the East. During the empire of the Moguls, the trade of India was carried on by the followers of Brahma.³⁹

In the Napoleonic wars, the assertion of Hindu superiority over the Muslims had, however, a new setting and implication. It was not commerce, but the military security of British power in India that stood behind this belief. In the development of the idea of Hindu superiority, Lawrence Campbell, the editor of the *Asiatick Annual Register* and a friend of Alexander Hamilton, played an important role. He was to employ this idea to rationalise Richard Wellesley's militarism in India.

To avoid conflicts and wars in India, the British government used diplomacy to contract military alliances with Indian states. In this system, these allied states came under the British government's protection by paying tribute. Richard Wellesley was appointed Governor General of India (1797-1805) in order to check Napoleon's plan to curb the British Empire in the East. On his arrival in India, together with his brothers, Henry and Arthur, Wellesley broke the neutral system established by Cornwallis and John Shore in India. The Wellesleys believed that the French had persuaded 'the warlike' Indian princes to wage war against the British, and they suggested that it was impossible to remain at peace with these princes. Arthur Wellesley felt that the

³⁹ Dow, *History of Hindostan*, pp. xxxv, xxxvi.

subsidiary alliance system 'sapped the independence of the states concerned and supported corrupt and inefficient rulers'.⁴⁰ Moreover, he thought the best way to defend was to attack. Wellesley therefore waged wars against Tipu Sultan of Mysore, and against the Mahrattas and other states.⁴¹ In Arthur Wellesley's mind, Tipu Sultan had to be destroyed if the British were to maintain a secure peace. It was impossible to have a treaty with the Muslim ruler: 'we complain, that professing the most amicable disposition, bound by subsisting treaties of peace and friendship, and unprovoked by any offence on our part, he has manifested a design to effect our total destruction'.⁴²

Robert Grant (1779- 1838), the second son of Charles Grant, criticised Wellesley's constant military conquests in India. The younger Grant contributed reviews of Indian affairs to the *Edinburgh Review* during Hamilton's absence from 1803- 6.⁴³ In a review published in the *Edinburgh* in 1805, Grant urged the British government to reform its administration of India. He wrote: 'thoughtless schoolboys go forth to plunder the East; that, eager to enrich themselves, they hasten their return to their native country; and that thus the wealth of India is uniformly expended in another quarter of the globe'.⁴⁴ Grant also censured Wellesley's militarism and described it as 'A Roman plan of conquest'. This plan was, for Grant, aided by 'intrigue and terror' in dealing with Indian princes. It

⁴⁰ Iris Butler, *The Eldest Brother* (London, 1973), p. 149.

⁴¹ C. A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: the British Empire and the World* (London, 1989), p. 106. For a concise chronological account of Wellesleys' wars in India, see Butler, *ibid.*, Part II, or Elizabeth Longford, *Wellington: The Year of the Sword* (London, 1969), pp. 79-105.

⁴² Butler, *ibid.*, p. 144.

⁴³ Probably Hamilton heard that Napoleon had obtained some Persian manuscripts on his expedition to Egypt, so he wanted to consult them. *Edinburgh Review*, (Jan. 1803), p. 320. In Paris, Hamilton taught elementary Sanskrit to young French and German Orientalists, such as Langles and Friedrich Schlegel. Rocher, *Alexander Hamilton*, pp. 42- 52.

⁴⁴ *Edinburgh Review*, (July 1805), p. 475.

was the plan of 'a despot grasping at popularity by gratifying the lower classes'.⁴⁵ Campbell replied to Grant's censures and tried to justify Wellesley's plan for conquering the Muslim princes. Campbell argued that Muslim sovereigns were despotic, who violated the rights of Hindu subjects. The despotic nature of the Muslims was embodied in the external policy of Aurungzebe, the last emperor of the Moghul Empire:

a fixed plan of universal, absolute, and unconditional subjugation. Ambition, avarice, and an assumed fanaticism were its ruling principles: the attainment of an undivided despotic dominion over the whole extent of the Indian continent, the acquisition of personal riches, and the conversion of the Hindûs to Mohammedan faith, were its chief objects. ⁴⁶

Therefore, Campbell maintained, Wellesley's conquest of Indian princes was to allow the Hindus to keep their indigenous customs and religion.⁴⁷ In order to illustrate his theory of Hindu superiority, Campbell divided the Indian states into three types or characters. The first were the 'Mohammedan' states, which were based on the principle: '*Money is here ... the essence of power ... the richest state is always the strongest.*'⁴⁸ The second were the Mahratta states: '*The system of the Mahratta is formed of rapacity, corruption and instability.*'⁴⁹ The third were the Hindu Rajahships:

... though tainted with those vicious principles of policy which Moghul government ... diffused throughout the country; yet they nevertheless retain something of that mildness, simplicity, temperance, and moderation, which formed the characteristic features of the ancient Hindû states, before their subjection by the Mohammedan arms. The character of these governments is founded on the restrictive principles of their religious and civil institutions; and corresponds with the genius and manners of the Hindu people.

It is owing to their mixed system of theology and jurisprudence, interwoven as it is with all their customs, and with their whole domestic œconomy, that the Hindû race have

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, (Jan. 1807), pp. 408-9.

⁴⁶ Campbell, Lawrence Dundas, *A Reply to the Strictures of the Edinburgh Review on the Foreign Policy of Marquis Wellesley's* (London, 1807), pp. 15-6.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 63-4. To be sure, the Mahrattas were also Hindus.

been able to preserve so much of their original character of patience, temperance, and forbearance, together with those industrious habits, and that love of the peaceful arts ...
50

Campbell laid bare the cultural ideology in which Wellesley's ideal of *Imperium Romanum* was rooted. Hindu society was more civilised than that of Islam, and the British army was fighting against the philistine states of the Muslims in order to protect the patient, peaceful and industrious Hindus.

James Mill later consciously repudiated the cultural ideology of Hindu superiority because, in Campbell's mind, that ideology had two implications. First, it assumed that the British, led by Wellesley, were protecting the Hindus' natural rights from Mohammedan despotism. But, in order to achieve this purpose, the British government had to be entitled to exercise 'absolute power' in governing the Indian subjects. Second, it maintained that there was a golden age in Hindu history before their subjection by the Muslim arms. It sought to help the Indians find out about their own great past.⁵¹ Campbell's argument was in line with Jones and Hastings's administrative philosophy that the first duty of governors of India was to 'help Asians rediscover the lost roots of their own civilizations'.⁵² On the other hand, Mill was to argue that the Muslims were superior to the Hindus in terms of advancement of civilisation. As the British were able to defeat the Muslims, they were naturally entitled to inherit the legacy of the Moghul empire. History was in a linear progression, and the successors of the sovereigns of India continued this line of historical progress. In Mill's mind, there was no golden age to which to return.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 67-8.

⁵¹ David Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance*, p. 70.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 97.

Although the Whigs were not in sympathy with Wellesley's aim of conquering the Islamic world in the subcontinent, their belief in Hindu superiority over Muslims was reinforced by other *Edinburgh* reviewers, such as Hamilton, Jeffrey and Sydney Smith. For instance, Sydney Smith gave credence to the belief in a Hindu high civilisation:

If it is a duty of general benevolence to convert the Heathen, it is less duty to convert the Hindoos than any other people, because they are already highly civilized, and because you must infallibly subject them to infamy and present degradation.⁵³

Indeed, Smith had some good arguments against the establishment of Christian missions in India. He argued that the Hindus had some savage customs, but thought that it was important to distinguish voluntary from coerced actions. 'We dislike all misery, voluntary or involuntary; but the difference between the torments which a man chooses, and those which he endures from the choice of the others, is very great'.⁵⁴ Smith thought that the security of India was more important than converting Indians to Christianity. 'Even for missionary purposes, therefore, the utmost discretion is necessary; and if we wish to teach the natives a better religion, we must take care to do it in a manner which will not inspire them with a passion for political change, or we shall inevitably lose our disciples altogether'.⁵⁵ When James Mill began contributing articles on Indian affairs to the *Edinburgh Review*, he had to take account of its pro-Hindu and anti-Muslim views. Some critics suggest that Mill misunderstood William Jones in thinking that the latter had implied that Hindu civilisation was higher than European civilisation.⁵⁶ There is no evidence, however, to suggest that Mill thought Jones held such an opinion. It would be

⁵³ *Edinburgh Review*, (April 1808), p. 180.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 179.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

⁵⁶ S. N. Mukherjee, *Citizen Historian: Explorations in Historiography* (Delhi, 1996), p. 89.

more accurate to say that James Mill saw that many writers in the *Edinburgh* and their associates, like Campbell, had utilised the Jonesian legacy to vindicate their conservative opinion of ruling India. And it is more the Jones' legacy than Jones himself that Mill tended to subduce.

The distinction between Hindu and Islam cultures was an example of British discovery of the heterogeneous societies in the Indian subcontinent. John Malcolm published his *Sketch of the Sikhs* in 1812. He assumed that the principal chiefs of the Sikhs were descendants of Hindus. They were 'more open and sincere than the Mahrattas, and less rude and savage than the Affghans'.⁵⁷ Malcolm was one of Wellesley's subordinates who took up high-ranking civilian office. Stokes identified Malcolm, together with Thomas Munro, Mountstuart Elphinstone and Charles Metcalfe, as belonging to the 'Romantic school' of administration in India. They shared the same favourable sentiment of Indian rural life and natural scenes. They found the rural communities to be the essence of Indian society.⁵⁸ On the other hand, they had long fought against the ferocious Muslims with the Wellesleys and Hindu sepoys. Their military experiences affected their inclination to the Hindus and aversion to the Muslims. In comparison with his colleagues, Malcolm was, perhaps, the most prolific writer who showed an affinity with enlightenment views of history. Based on his enlightenment perspective of history, Malcolm's histories also vindicated Hindu superiority over the Muslim society. In his *History of Persia* (1815), Malcolm contrasted despotic government with that of the Hindus. In a Voltairean vein, Malcolm pointed out that:

⁵⁷ Quoted from John Barrow's review. *Quarterly Review* (July 1813), pp. 478-9.

⁵⁸ Stokes, *English Utilitarians and India*, ch. 1.

Asiatic historians seldom speculate upon changes in the manners of men, in the frame of society, or on the form of governments. They are entire strangers to the science of political economy, and never reason upon any subject connected with the rise or fall of nations, except with reference to the personal character of their rulers. It must be obvious, that such writers, though they may be more free from error, can never attain any portion of that excellence which belongs to those who, living under happier auspices, have mixed the wisdom of philosophy with the facts of history in a manner which has enabled them to instruct future ages, by their narration of the events of the past. From what has been said, it will appear that the defects of eastern history are not to be ascribed to any want of talents in its authors, but to the condition of the society in which they lived, and to the subjects of which they treat. The tale of despotism, which is the only one they have to tell, is always the same.⁵⁹

Malcolm held typical Scottish enlightenment views about the status of women.

In Persia the lower classes deem females important in proportion as they are useful in domestic duties: the higher consider them as born for their sensual gratification. ... in a Mahomedan community, every man is a despot in his own house.⁶⁰

His critique of Oriental despotism resembled the enlightenment's. He asserted that the absence of ranks and subordination usually meant despotism, not independence. He remarked that in despotic states 'there are no middle classes'.⁶¹ Above all, Malcolm attacked Mohammedanism.

There is no example, during more than twelve centuries, of any Mahomedan nation having attained a high rank in the scale of civilisation. The inhabitants of all those countries who have adopted this religion, have invariably been exposed to the miseries of an arbitrary and unsettled rule.⁶²

In the end, Malcolm went so far as to maintain that Persia was so uncivilised that it did not deserve to be conquered:

The great proportion of the inhabitants of this kingdom must be civilized before they could be subdued. Neither the soil, nor the productions of the country, are of a nature to

⁵⁹ John Malcolm, *History of Persia* (2 vols., London, 1815), i, 276.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, ii, 588, 622.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 631.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 621.

Malcolm's acknowledgement of Hamilton's help and Mackintosh's favourable review in the *Edinburgh* both helped to reinforce the authority of Malcolm and other military officers in matters of knowledge and government of India. Most important, the *Edinburgh* reviewers seemed to agree with the military officers' policies for governing India and with their cultural ideology enshrining Hindu superiority over Muslim institutions. In the imperial history of the Indian sub-continent, the Campbellian, Hamiltonian and Malcolmian theory of Hindu superiority was to break the continuity of history of conquests. Robertson and many eighteenth century writers lauded Akbar. By doing so, Robertson was thinking of the British as the successor to the Moghul empire. On the other hand, Campbell, Hamilton and Wellesley's school of officials tended to create a new ideology to justify the British empire. But, apart from justifying military actions, would this cultural ideology help the British to govern the Hindus well? James Mill tried to revolt against the ideology. He intended to give a progressive historiography of the Indian subcontinent. According to his idea of progress, the British presence in India was justified, and the modernisation of Indian societies, including those of both the Hindus and the Muslims, was legitimised.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 503. Very likely, Malcolm made this statement because he intended to restrict the British Empire's expansion. Malcolm thought that 'once the British had absorbed the whole of India under their direct rule, turbulence would be denied its natural outlets, and all discontent would gather to a single head against the British power.' Stokes, *English Utilitarians and India*, p. 17. That is to say, Malcolm thought that a balance of power policy was necessary in India. But the need to consider the balance of power was not so much a matter for external affairs as for internal affairs, regarding the danger of possible rebellions.

vi. Public opinion and the monopoly of knowledge of India

By taking on the subject of Indian affairs in the nineteenth century, James Mill placed himself in a peculiar situation. The Whig view of government in India emphasised professionalism. Thus, it was Orientalists and officials-cum-Orientalists, such as Malcolm and many others, who claimed authority in dealing with Indian affairs. In 1806, soon after having returned from Paris, Hamilton wrote on India in a similar vein to Campbell in order to promote the authority of the Orientalists in representing Indian reality. Perhaps irritated because some non-Orientalists had discussed Indian affairs in the *Edinburgh* during his absence, Hamilton emphatically remarked that it was absolutely necessary to acquire local knowledge and languages in order to write about India.

... many European travellers, and a variety of Mohamedan writers, had attempted to delineate the opinions and manners of the natives of India; but ignorant of the language, which could alone furnish a secure guide to their researches, their disquisitions have seldom presented more than an accumulation of errors.⁶⁴

According to Hamilton, the Muslim conquerors were incapable of understanding the opinion and manners of 'the native of India'. On the Jonesian and Hamiltonian legacy, Orientalist knowledge was to be given authority in promoting indirect government in British India: British legislators should not be invested with the right of making laws and policies for India. The cultural meaning of the idea of indirect government was that local knowledge and national differences should be taken into account in making policies and that these could be understood only by those who had knowledge of languages of the country.

⁶⁴ *Edinburgh Review*, (Oct. 1806), p. 92.

Many *Edinburgh* reviewers and their associates, such as Malcolm, supported the idea of indirect government. Malcolm propagated the importance of local knowledge. He suggested that the officials and Orientalists had authority over ruling India because they had knowledge and opportunity to determine the best 'political expedience' for the government in India. Mackintosh also claimed: '[t]he East India Company, and indeed any branch of the Indian Administration in Europe, can do little directly for India'.⁶⁵ In short, direct government was impossible and impractical, because the politicians in London were unable to grasp the reality of Indian society due both to distance and lack of immediate knowledge.

One of the unexpected concomitants of the notion of the indirect government of India was that knowledge of Indian affairs became obscured from the public and monopolised by the Orientalists or officials in India. Many Orientalist-civilians argued that ruling India should be conducted through Indian idioms. Hastings encouraged Oriental studies and patronised the Asiatick Society as he thought 'the Englishman would have to learn to think and act like an Asian'; otherwise, 'the empire would ultimately collapse'.⁶⁶ For the British, to use Indian idioms to govern India was to become involved in cultural translation. As a result, the translators, those who obtained the linguistic knowledge of India, were unequivocally empowered to rule India. When Hamilton criticised the travellers and the Muslims who misrepresented Hindu civilisation, he was, indeed, questioning their ability to understand and to rule these subjects. More and more military and civilian administrators, such as Malcolm,

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, (Oct. 1815), pp. 441-2.

⁶⁶ Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance*, p. 18.

Campbell and Elphinstone, started to compose Indian histories. The theory of cultural translation in imperial government sanctioned the claim that Asian languages, not European ideas, were the prerequisite of the ruling class in India. It also sanctioned the view that indirect government of India was necessary and unavoidable. Moreover, the interpreters and translators in the government were to be assigned an important role in policy-making.

James Mill supported the idea of indirect government. But, Mill also supported the idea of establishing a supreme government in Britain to monitor the administration of British government in India and to make principles of government for that country. That is to say that Mill did not accept the cultural implications of indirect government: he did not accept that the Orientalists had a fully-fledged authority to represent the situation in India. Mill proclaimed that everyone who could reason well should be able to understand Indian society well. The ability to translate Indian culture was not an essential or sufficient qualification, important as it was, for joining in the discussion of Indian affairs. It was reasoning and judgement that counted. Eight years before the publication of the *History of British India*, Mill had already argued in the *Edinburgh Review* that it was possible for a person who had never been to India to understand that country. Mill argued that history was not merely the collection of facts, but the arriving at 'inferences' from facts. The travellers were like witnesses, and the European non-traveller like a judge who, 'by the exercise of his intellect upon the testimony and records before him', could endeavour 'to conceive accurately that which has been observed inaccurately'.⁶⁷ Mill emphatically and consciously argued that the insistence on personal knowledge as

⁶⁷ *Edinburgh Review*, (Jan. 1810), p. 368.

the sole qualification for comprehending an Asian country was advanced by 'the monopoly of the Oriental linguists and travellers'.⁶⁸ Mill's reasoning should be understood in the context of the claims by Hamilton and other British officials that personal knowledge and knowledge of Indian languages were necessary for discussing Indian affairs. A monopoly of knowledge was the prerequisite for the monopoly of administration and government.

In contrast to this monopoly of knowledge, Mill wished, as it were, for a democracy. He believed that the British public should have the right to know about and to influence the government of India. He also believed that it was ideas, not languages, that were the key factors in learning how to govern India well. Sensible of the power of knowledge as Mill was, he certainly did not appreciate Malcolm's *The History of Persia*. Writing a review of the work for *The British Review*, Mill openly complained that Malcolm did not provide references for his readers: 'So little was he able to appreciate the critical duties of the historian, that he gives not even the bibliography of the works which he consults; of many of which nobody knows any thing but himself.'⁶⁹ Mill complained about Malcolm not only because he regarded the giving of references as part of the academic norms required by the scientific community, but also because Mill himself needed to rely on the translations of the Orientalists and the reports of travellers in order to reason on and conjure up Indian society and history. Malcolm was an Orientalist, diplomat and future governor of Bombay. His history of India would have an influence on British policy-making by the government. But how could the British public

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 367.

⁶⁹ *The British Review*, vii (1816), 315. By this time, James Mill had been virtually 'excommunicated' from the *Edinburgh* by Jeffrey for his 'verbose style' and radical attitude towards to reform.

know that Malcolm's, and many other Orientalists', knowledge of India was absolutely correct if such authors did not give references? The absence of references was part of what Mill meant by the Orientalists' 'monopoly of knowledge'. It is also because of the 'democratic' or liberal view of knowledge that Mill, in his later life, did not support Haileybury College's monopoly in producing candidates for administrators. Mill thought that a proper knowledge of jurisprudence was a more important requirement than knowledge of Indian languages for governing the country. Because of the lack of academic rigour in Haileybury, he suggested that Parliament open competitions for those who wanted to serve in civil government in India.⁷⁰

vii. Conservative government in India

In justifying the Wellesleys' military actions in India, Campbell expressed a Jonesian conservatism.

... when their *religious prejudices, and ancient customs are respected*, has been proved in numberless instances, and is attested by this undeniable fact, - that chiefly through *their attachment, and their capacity for military service*, our Indian dominions have been acquired and maintained.⁷¹

The Jonesian, Hamiltonian, Campbellian and Malcolmian views of the British government in India incorporated the view that 'The chief contribution to India from European civilisation should be political stability and military protection, at least for the

⁷⁰ *Parliamentary Papers* (1831-2), ix, p. 55. In fact, James Mackintosh was the Professor of Law at the College at that time. It is only speculation to suggest that Mill's criticism of the poor discipline of jurisprudence at the College was a revenge for Mackintosh's criticism of Benthamite ideas of law in the *Edinburgh*.

⁷¹ Campbell, *A Reply*, p. 132. Emphases in original.

present, with a government based on Indian laws and mores'.⁷² The problems of knowledge of India, territorial security and governing India 'in its own terms' were all related and indivisible. Although the *Edinburgh* reviewers were not as pessimistic about and indifferent to social or political reforms in India as Campbell, they, too, developed a conservative outlook on ruling India.

After 1813 the *Edinburgh* reviewers, under Jeffrey's and Mackintosh's tutelage, expressed a conservative view of reform in British India. The *Edinburgh*'s view of Indian reform was a reaction to the Tory *Quarterly*'s victory in the battle over the East India Company's Charter. When Charles Grant became Chairman of the Company, he and Wilberforce, John Shore and other members of the Clapham Sect, were able to form an influential minority in the House of Commons.⁷³ With their support, the Charter was renewed, in 1813, with clauses, allowing *laissez-faire*, liberalism and humanitarian reform in India, but not evangelical missionary activity.⁷⁴ Under the circumstances, the new generation of military-cum-Orientalist officers and the *Edinburgh* reviewers became more defensive in their attitudes toward reform in India. With their knowledge of India and their histories of Asian civilisation, they promoted a conservative approach to reform. On the other hand, British governors, such as Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone gradually came to distrust the idea of a cold or impersonal governmental machine. They preferred the Hindu tradition of village communities with revenue collectors as a form of 'personal government'. The Romantic officials hoped the British administrators would

⁷² Garland Cannon, *Oriental Jones*, p.130.

⁷³ Grant was one of the Chairmen in 1804-06, 1807-10, and 1815-16. A.T. Embree, *Charles Grant*, p. 205.

⁷⁴ Bearce, *British Attitudes towards India*, p. 67.

conduct themselves as a familiar lord in India, 'visiting and speaking with the subjects of their quarrels and their crops, and looked up to as *ma-bap*, or mother and father.'⁷⁵ To justify such a communal ideology, Elphinstone and Malcolm relied on a Burkean conservatism which implied that human society was a continuum of past, present and future. They were not ready to think about removing the basic social structures of India.⁷⁶ They did not promote the idea of imposing changes by force from outside Indian society, and the theory of cultural translation was reinforced by their imperial attitude.

The *Edinburgh* reviewers generally urged that reform in India should slow down, emphasising the cultural and national differences between the British and the Indians on the one hand, and Europeans and Asians on the other. Mackintosh was, at the time, one of the men who supported the conservative view of British government in India, with the soundest philosophical approach. The author of *Vindiciae Gallicae* had a dark view of Indian society. He suggested legal reform in Bombay in a Benthamite spirit, so that criminal justice could be administered in a way that was 'milder than any which has hitherto been attempted in any part of the British dominions'.⁷⁷ After 1814, however, Mackintosh broke with Bentham and his associates, partly due to their disagreements over the London University project. Replacing James Mill as the contributor of review articles to the *Edinburgh* on Indian affairs, Mackintosh generally expressed the Edinburgh Whigs' view of moderate reform:

The object which the reformer (only another name for the lawgiver) must frequently and

⁷⁵ Quote from Stokes, *English Utilitarians and India*, pp. 15, 20- 1.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 15. For Burke's ideas of constitution and history in relation to governing India, see Whelan, *Edmund Burke and India*.

⁷⁷ Quoted from Jane Rendall, 'The Political Ideas and Activities of Sir James Mackintosh 1765- 1832', Ph.D. Thesis, (University of London, 1972), p. 76.

practically contemplate, is a reformation a little better than the actual stage of things. ... his proper sphere is that to which the fullest light of reason and experience spreads, where every step is distinctly visible, and where the effects of the change are almost as certain as those of the established institution.⁷⁸

Mackintosh's statement urged reformers to take the consequences of reform into account. For Mackintosh, cultural and national developments had their logic in a stadial evolution. Before he converted himself into a Romantic governor in India and tried to construct a paternal government of *ma-bap*, Elphinstone, like Mackintosh, had also been sympathetic to Bentham's theory of legislation and had even thought of employing Bentham's ideas in order to reform Indian society.⁷⁹ In a review of Elphinstone's *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul and its Dependencies in Persia, Tartary, and India* Mackintosh censured Elphinstone:

After all, the whole error of Mr Elphinstone's benevolent reveries perhaps consisted in contemplating the possibility of too sudden a change in so great a mass; - the change of an Asiatic government into an European, and, still more, to the best of European, within any period to which the foresight of man reaches, is indeed evidently a chimerical speculation.⁸⁰

Mackintosh believed that even if the Indians were capable of emulating European government, they might not be able to emulate the best form of government in the world, that is, the British government. Other reviewers and conservative administrators in British India expressed, more explicitly than Mackintosh, their doubts about the Indians' ability to learn European manners and methods. Malcolm remarked that Persian history was an endless circle of corruption. In commenting on the progress of Persian history,

⁷⁸ *Edinburgh Review*, (Oct, 1815), p. 431.

⁷⁹ Elphinstone was a correspondent of Edward Strachey, a Benthamite disciple who worked as an assistant examiner at India House. Stokes, *English Utilitarians and India*, p.50. Stokes claims that Elphinstone, Munro and Malcolm had Romantic temperaments, and were greatly influenced by the Romantic poets in their outlooks on governing India. See in the same title, pp.11ff and *passim*.

⁸⁰ *Edinburgh Review*, (Oct. 1815), p. 430.

Malcolm claimed that it was 'a progress, not on a line that advances, but on that of a circle, which terminated where it began'.⁸¹ Likewise, Jeffrey confidently ascribed lineal progress exclusively to European history:

They [the Asians], in short, have remained nearly where they were; while *we*, beginning with the improvement of our governments, and military discipline, have gradually outstripped them ... All these great advantages, however - this apparently irrepressible impulse to improvement - this security against backsliding and decay, seems peculiar to Europe, and not capable of being communicated ... to the most docile races of the other quarters of the world: and it is really extremely difficult to explain, upon what are called philosophical principles, the causes of this superiority.⁸²

Asian history was doomed to an endless rotating within a certain level of civilisation, while European history had made a break-through from that circle of advance and decay. Above all, the success of European history could not possibly be transplanted, let alone grafted onto 'the most docile races of the other quarters of the world'. Jeffrey's idea of European superiority not only described the existing reality of European superiority in political institutions, but also predicted that this superiority would continue, as non-European nations were unable to communicate their culture to European nations.

This cultural identity and exclusion were also found in the political outlook of Malcolm and Munro. Though Malcolm agreed that it was vital to bring the Indians up to a more civilised life, he disputed the need for missionary activity in India. On the eve of parliament's discussion of the renewal of the East Indian Company's Charter, Malcolm published his *Sketch of the Political History of India* in 1811. He argued a conservative

⁸¹ Malcolm, *History of Persia*, i, 271.

⁸² Italics original. Francis Jeffrey, *Contributions to the Edinburgh Review* (4 vols., London, 1844), ii, 212-4. Italics are in original. Jeffrey's words appeared in his review on John Leyden and William Erskine's translation of *Memoirs of Zehir-Din Muhammed Baber*. But Jeffrey certainly also appreciated Malcolm's works. He was surprised to know that there was only one English book, 'Malcolm's Persia' in the Egyptian Sultans' Library at Cairo. Though surprised, he described it as 'not ill-chosen'. Jeffrey, *ibid.*, iv, 333.

cause:

These [Hindu] converts are but little acquainted with the purity of the faith, which they profess; and so far from being that example in their lives. ... the British Government will never be so deluded by well-meant but misguided representations; as to adopt measures, which are likely to fail in effecting the object of promoting the Christian religion; but will be certain to destroy our reputation, and probably our power, in India.⁸³

Munro also claimed:

The character of the Hindoos is probably much the same as when Vasco da Gama first visited India, and it is not likely that it will be much better a century hence.

When I read as I sometimes do, of a measure by which a large province has been suddenly improved, or a race of semi-barbarians civilized almost to quakerism, I throw away the book.⁸⁴

The 'docile races', the non-Europeans and 'the Hindoos' were said not to be able to understand European political institutions and the purity of the Christian faith, or even to be civilised. The British should adopt a conservative approach to governing India because it was a safeguard against possible rebellions among the indigenous people provoked by political innovations. Moreover, the *Edinburgh* reviewers and Romantic governors held the same national and cultural beliefs about Asian unchangeability, and this nationalist sentiment was in direct proportion to their geographical distance from the object of enquiry. Although the British constitution was a great achievement in human history, it was incomprehensible to other peoples. European or British superiority could not help but be perpetuated as the inferior state of non-Europeans was unlikely to 'be much better a century hence'. This was the reason why the Jonesian legacy was crucial, as it appeared to clarify to the British how to govern the Indians on their own terms.

By 1828, the Sanskrit expert Hamilton was dead. Macaulay was severely to attack

⁸³ John Malcolm, *Sketch of the Political History of India* (London, 1811), pp. 469, 474.

⁸⁴ Quoted from Stokes, *English Utilitarians and India*, p. 24.

James Mill and the Benthamite philosophy of government in the following year, much as Mackintosh had done before. The antagonism between James Mill and Jeffrey became only too evident. In repudiating the Utilitarian philosophy of reform in India, Jeffrey insisted on the Jonesian and Robertsonian legacy of governing India. In agreement with the Humean thesis that politics had to be entirely based on opinion, Jeffrey proposed that it was important to appreciate Indian prejudices in order to govern India well. Given this belief, Jeffrey explicitly criticised James Mill and his radical political sect:

we would, in almost any case, take his [Heber's] testimony, even on a superficial view, against that of a much cleverer person, who, with ampler opportunities, had surveyed or reported with the feelings, consciously or unconsciously cherished, of an advocate, a theorist, a bigot, or a partizan.

Unhappily, almost all who have hitherto had the means of knowing much about India, have been, in a greater or less degree, subject to these influences.⁸⁵

The description of 'a theorist, a bigot, or a partizan' could refer separately to the advocates of Benthamite Utilitarianism, missionary work and patriotism.

All in all, the Napoleonic wars gave rise to a peculiar ideological environment for British policy in India, one in which the Whigs, who supported principles of liberty in government and thought that only a good scholar could be a good administrator, found a common viewpoint on Indian affairs with military officials in India, who supported ruling India in an Indian idiom. They shared a belief in Hindu superiority, indirect government and military conquests beyond Bengal. In principle, the *Edinburgh* reviewers found themselves little concerned with India beyond commerce. Behind all the cultural ideologies, there was an attitude well exposed by Sydney Smith:

... our parents and children are nearer to us than the people of India or China; that the good we can do to them, if smaller in amount, is more certain, and the gratification to be

⁸⁵ Jeffrey, *Contributions to Edinburgh Review*, iv. 297-8.

derived from it more constant and secure. Therefore it is that we say, that our duties to our families, to our neighbours, and to our country, are *set before us* by God himself; and that we are not at liberty to desert them, in order to gain a remote chance of conferring greater benefits on strangers at a distance.⁸⁶

This attitudinal distinction of neighbours and ‘strangers’ befitted the environment in which national identities and sentiments grew rapidly during the Napoleonic wars. In one way or another, this theory of the economy of sentiment, with regard to geographical proximity, rationalised and encouraged the proposal of indirect government in British India.

Having completed his apprenticeship on dealing with Indian affairs in the *Edinburgh Review*, James Mill found that he had to react against and oppose the conservative school of British government with ideological support drawn from the *Edinburgh* reviewers. Mill did not support missionary activity in India. Nor did he support a monopoly of knowledge, the cultural ideology of Hindu superiority or the policy of governing India through Hindu idioms. Mill started, systematically, tackling William Jones’s legacy which he saw as the source of the cultural ideologies he was opposing. As early as 1810, Mill disagreed with Jones. He wrote:

The project of Sir William Jones to obtain a code for the administration of justice among the Hindus, with the authority of their own lawgivers, was philanthropic and meritorious; but the mode in which it was undertaken was injudicious. His plan was, to employ the Brahmens, totally unaided by European intelligence; that is, to employ the lights of a people still semi-barbarous, - to compile a body of laws from the crude materials of old sayings, old poems, old practices, and old maxims regarded as laws, – when it was in his power to have applied all the mental powers of European knowledge and civilization.⁸⁷

Mill’s words must sound very unpleasant to many modern readers. Mill however was living in an age when the great majority of people believed in a hierarchy of society in

⁸⁶ *Edinburgh Review*, (April 1808), pp. 170n-171n. Italics in original.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, (April 1810), p. 157.

terms of civilisational achievement. Some did not agree with ascribing 'all the mental powers of European knowledge and civilisation' to the British government in India but not because they already believed in John Stuart Mill's individualism. Those who disagreed with the policy of 'civilising' the Asians believed they themselves could comprehend Asian society and institutions, while the Asians could not understand European institutions. In short, James Mill's opposition to many Orientalists and *Edinburgh* reviewers, as has been seen, was advanced in a context where the idea of national or individual subjectivity was still over the horizon.

CHAPTER 5

JAMES MILL AND THE HISTORY OF *THE HISTORY OF BRITISH INDIA*

i. Mill's motive in writing the *History*

In 1806, James Mill embarked on writing *The History of British India*, which was, however, not published until the beginning of 1818. He confessed to Macvey Napier that he would never have dreamt of taking on this task had he realised how much time it would demand.¹ Mill worked on the *History* simultaneously with his journalist jobs. Starting with his writing for the *Literary Journal* in 1806, Mill published comprehensive reviews on British affairs in India for, among others, *The Edinburgh Review*, *The Monthly Review*, *The Philanthropist*, *The British Review* and *The Eclectic Review*.² In these journals, Mill presented many significant points to the public, which he later further developed in the *History*. For example, in reviewing Malcolm's *History of Persia*, Mill maintained that Asian historians were as keen on speculation and imagination as those of the Middle Ages in Europe.³ In his *History*, Mill emphasised that the marvels and the exaggerated descriptions in Asian history were indications of the low status of Asian civilisation.⁴ In an article for the *Edinburgh Review* in 1809, Mill

¹ Bain, *James Mill*, p. 158; Macvey Napier, *Selection from the Correspondence of the late Macvey Napier*, ed. Macvey Napier Jr. (London, 1879), pp. 16-7.

² For the most complete list of Mill's anonymous writings, see Robert Anthony Fenn, Appendix to *James Mill's Political Thought*. Mill started his literary career editing for the *Anti-Jacobin Journal* in 1803. After he had completely withdrawn himself from the *Edinburgh Review*, Mill devoted himself to *The Westminster Review*. These first and third of these journals, however, had little on Asian or Indian affairs.

³ *The British Review*, 7 (1816), 321.

⁴ Mill, *History*, ii, 42-55.

argued further that his only qualification for writing a history of India was that he had never been to the country of his inquiry. This same argument was seen again in the notorious apology in his Preface to the *History*. John Crawford, himself a popular historian of Asian history, and a contributor to the *Edinburgh Review* and a long time resident in India, lauded Mill's *History* and claimed that Mill had demonstrated to the public how an author could write of India very well even though he had never visited the land.⁵ Crawford would probably not have praised Mill so confidently if he had not seen the argument in the *Edinburgh Review* beforehand. These reviews, in short, played a major part in shaping public opinion.⁶ Perhaps the authorities of Haileybury College later accepted Mill's book as a standard textbook because many points found in the *History* had become popular with and familiar to the public through the pages of the *Edinburgh Review*. The popularity of the *History*, however, should not be overstated. Malthus, the Professor of Political Economy at Haileybury College, observed that the work was not immediately popular at the time of its publication.⁷ This is understandable, since the *History* was harsh on Wellesley's military expeditions, Cornwallis's legislative reforms and the Company's monopoly. Not surprisingly, the book was despised by people such as the high Tories, the Board of Control of India and the Board of Directors of the East India Company.

⁵ John Crawford, *History of Indian Archipelago* (3 vols., Edinburgh, 1820), iii, 53.

⁶ Duncan Forbes, 'James Mill and India', 23.

⁷ 'I am glad however that Mill remains staunch to the *true* faith; and I assure you I have a high opinion of his knowledge and talents since I have read the first volume of his work on India, though I fear it is not very popular.' Malthus wrote to Ricardo on 14 Feb. 1818, *The Works and Correspondence of David Ricardo*, vii, 253.

It is not absolutely clear why Mill chose the topic of British India as a major occupation of his literary career when he had just begun to make himself known to the public. But it is not a surprise to see a Scot undertaking such a task. The Scots had been highly interested in other parts of the world as explorers or merchants. While the Highlanders joined the army to serve all over the Empire, the Lowlanders composed many novels and histories of the colonies. Some graduates of Scottish universities, particularly those who had come from the lower social strata and had undertaken literary or journalistic work to earn a living, frequently took the non-European world as their primary subject matter. For example, John Leyden, a colleague of Mill's in the class taking Greek at the University of Edinburgh, published a work on Africa in 1799 before he took an M.D. degree from St. Andrews and went to India as a surgeon in 1802. Among the British colonies or non-European societies that attracted considerable public attention, India was most significant in the early nineteenth century. It was not a surprise, therefore, to see James Mill choosing India for his subject. During the Napoleonic wars, India, like Egypt, was a frequent topic of public discussion in the press. As mentioned, in 1806, the British were experiencing 'the war of pamphlets' concerning missionary activity in India. In the same year, the East India Company founded the East India College at Hertford, which was later moved to Haileybury in 1809 (subsequently known as Haileybury College). The Directors of the East India Company believed that boys of tender ages destined for India needed to possess elementary knowledge for their future life as magistrates, tax collectors, merchants and politicians.⁸ All of these happenings

⁸ Embree, *Charles Grant and British Rule in India*, p. 196.

around 1806 suggested that a history of India had to be demanded, and could be a promising topic for a literary career for a poor young man like Mill.

Material interests, however, can hardly explain adequately why Mill invested so much effort in writing the *History*. To begin with, it does not explain why Mill took so long to accomplish it. John Stuart Mill, almost from the very outset in his *Autobiography*, introduced his father as ‘the author of the *History of British India*’. John Mill stated that, by 1819, his father was supporting a family of nine children by hack journalism. But, even ‘with these burdens on him, [he had] planned, commenced, and completed, the History of India’.⁹ At the age of six, John Mill helped his father in reading and copying the drafts of the *History*. Through assisting in the formation of the *History*, John Mill was introduced to Scottish philosophical history and sociology. Thus, the *History* was an important part of Mill’s family education and intellectual practice with particular references to Scottish thought and historiography.

In addition, the importance of Indian affairs was well recognised by the public during the Napoleonic wars. In the first eight issues of the *Edinburgh Review*, for instance, about 25 per cent of articles were dedicated to the non-European world, and about 13 per cent were about India. The East India Company had long been involved in both commerce and government in India. But, two new developments made the Company’s role even more crucial and controversial. First, Cornwallis enacted the Permanent Settlement in 1793, auctioning out the Company’s lands to individual great landowners or *zemindars*. Then, the company collected revenues from them, while they in turn collected rents from tenants or *ryots*. Together with the revenue collection, taxes

⁹ John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography*, pp. 2-4.

on salt, opium and some other products were also levied. In short, the Company came to function more explicitly as a state government.¹⁰ Second, during the Napoleonic wars, newly added territories and financial problems worsened the Company's situation. Since the late eighteenth century, it had become crucial to understand the role of the East India Company in the constitutional sense, and to consider ways in which its finance and administration might be improved.

In delivering a few observations on this complicated question, we will adopt the usual partition of it; which we find to be also adopted by the author of these considerations. This divides the *commercial* from the *political* department of the subject. The Company *trade* with India; and they *rule* it. The division, however, between the two departments, is not, in all respects, absolutely marked; yet we know not that a better could have been found; and, at all events, this has now the sanction of use in its favour. ... Politically, the administration of the East India Company may be viewed, with regard both to its effects on the welfare and happiness of our Asiatic fellow-subjects, and to its effects at home on the constitution.¹¹

Problems in the 'commercial' and the 'political' aspects of Anglo-Indian affairs were indeed a perfect subject for Scottish scholarship, given its affinity to such subjects as political economy and philosophical history. James Mill would certainly feel quite at home with both of these departments of knowledge. Thus, India provided Mill with a terrain on which he could exercise his intellect and develop his outlook on society. Indeed, as will be illustrated, Mill's *History* is composed of two major parts. The first is an analysis of Indian society which differed substantially from those of Jones and Robertson. It is based on the Scottish stadial theory and Jeffrey's notion of semi-barbarism. Second, Mill used his knowledge of political economy and Benthamite

¹⁰ For the impact of the Permanent Settlement on official monopoly and the ideas of free-trade, see William J. Barber, *British Economic Thought and India 1600- 1858* (Oxford, 1975), chs. 6 and 7.

¹¹ *Edinburgh Review* (July 1807), pp. 337-8. The authorship is not identified in the *Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals*. I think this article was most likely written by Robert Grant or James Mill.

Utilitarianism to develop a programme for the reform of Indian society.

Mill's *History* is composed of six Books.¹² It starts from 1527, in the year Robert Thorne proposed to Henry VIII that a route to India should be found through the North-west passage, and ends in 1805, the year Richard Wellesley's governor-generalship came to an end, and one year before Mill commenced writing the *History*. Mill took 1527 as the starting point in order to endorse the symbolic meaning that India possessed for the British, as with other European nations, - a vision of expanding trade over new horizons. A history of British India could be little more than a history of the East India Company in Mill's time. But Mill was also following Robertson's *Disquisition*. He wanted to give a history of British India as an account of the intercourse of Britain with India and beyond the Company. Accordingly, Mill did not set up an independent chapter, or even a section to illustrate the establishment of the East India Company in 1600 with Elizabeth's signature on the Charter or its merge with another company in 1709. The historical significance of that Company seemed to Mill to be no more significant than any other adventurers' activities in India.¹³ British India was a national business, and the East India Company was included in it.¹⁴ Thus, two main aspects occupy Mill's *History*. As a matter of fact, it is still an account of the evolution of the Company in terms of diplomatic, commercial and political changes. But Mill emphatically described how the Company was affected and changed by British politics. Apart from Books II and III

¹² The first edition of 1818 consists of 4 volumes, the third edition, 1826 of 6 volumes. The Wilson edition of 1858 that I currently used consists also of 6 volumes, in addition to Wilson's own 3-volume-work covering the years 1806 to 1835, together with one index volume.

¹³ Mill, *History*, i, 1ff; particularly, pp. 17, 105-6.

¹⁴ To be sure, Mill consciously chose to use 'English nation' as a synonym of 'British' nation. For instance, Mill, *History*, i, 106.

which describe Hindu and Muslim societies ‘in its own right’, the *History* draws heavily on the Company’s constitutional changes in 1709, 1773, 1774, and 1793. Besides, it divides the history by each governor’s period of office. Among the governorship, those of Warren Hastings, Lord Cornwallis and Wellesley are focal points for Mill’s descriptions. In short, the *History* is far more a significant part of British constitutional history than an economic history.

The first Book describes the first contacts of Britain and India till 1708, in which the single East India Company was established with an exclusive legal right to trade with India. Books II and III give extensive accounts of Hindu and Muslim society and culture respectively. Book IV describes the turbulent internal politics of India and how the Company was endowed with *Diwani* and entrusted with the government of Bengal. Again, Mill, like Burke and Robertson, did not highlight 1757, the ‘glorious’ moment of British India. Macaulay complained about this, and he sought to remedy its defect in his famed article on Robert Clive. Book V describes the constitutional change of the Company in 1773 and 1774, the creation of the Board of Control in 1784, intensification of the British political impact on India and Hastings’ government in India. Book VI gives a detailed account of British conflicts against Oude, Mysore and Mahrattas under John Shore’s and Wellesley’s governments, and then Mill assessed the Cornwallis reforms in India.

There are some stylistic points in the *History* worthy of notice. First, the *History* is an agglomeration of transcriptions and summaries of reports, travels and contemporary histories of India. Mill repeatedly came back to some central concerns, such as judicial reform. For example, he criticised the British for not providing sufficient facilities for

law-suits in India under Hastings' rule in the 1770s.¹⁵ In describing Cornwallis's rule in India, the same point reappeared as the most crucial defect of British government.¹⁶ Mill admitted that his own writing style was plain. Because of the continued recurrence of some major points, the *History* appears to be verbose.¹⁷ From an overall view, the *History* gives readers an impression of British India as a country very much struggling for a socially, economically and constitutionally stable condition of life. Mill deliberately selected narratives of political intrigues and military conflicts in British India in order to create an image of inefficiency and ineptitude, enabling him to set out his double criticism of Indian society and British government at the same time. In addition, although the narrative part of the *History* is a 'scissors-and-paste' compilation,¹⁸ it is not devoid of Mill's characteristic opinions and evaluations of human actions and institutional implementation. For instance, in describing the East India Company's constitutional change in the early eighteenth century in Book IV, Mill grasped the chance to express his opinion of political economy against monopolist arguments.¹⁹ The heavy 'objective' narratives in *History* are intermittently intersected and entangled with the author's 'subjective' commentaries. Besides, Mill's description becomes very detailed as he approached to his own time. The last Book includes two volumes but covers a

¹⁵ Mill, *History*, iii, pp. 377-8.

¹⁶ Mill, *History*, v, 420ff. See the discussion in Ch. 6 of this study.

¹⁷ 'I am inclined ... to flatter myself in the mean time with hopes of some popularity, notwithstanding the plainness with which I tell people, what they do not like' Letter from Mill to Sir John Stuart, 31 March 1817, NLS MSS Acc 4796 f2/66. Although brilliant in its own right, Thomas's introduction to the abridged edition of Mill's *History* suggests that Mill did not intend to write the *History* to please ordinary people. I think Thomas's conclusion should be modified to some degree. William Thomas, 'Introduction' to Mill *The History of British India* (Chicago, 1975), p. xi. Francis Jeffrey once complained to Brougham that Mill tended to be verbose.

¹⁸ William Thomas, *The Philosophic Radicals*, p. 114. See also his 'Introduction' to *The History of British India* (Chicago, 1975), pp. xi-xlvii.

¹⁹ Mill, *History*, iii, 32-3.

relatively short span of time from 1784 to 1805. The whole *History* discusses British India for about three hundred year. But Mill, partly because of the nature of his sources, spent one-third of the narrative in describing one-tenth of the period. Mill's *History* is essentially the history of modern British India.

As far as the present study is concerned, Book II, III and VI are much more problematic than the others. Book II discusses Hinduism, Hindu arts, laws, technology, science, and social institutions. More importantly, it contains Mill's reflection and criticism of much cultural evaluation of India in Britain. The first half of Book VI discusses Cornwallis' political reforms and Mill's own critiques of those measures and reforms. In short, while the other Books contain much more narrative than polemic, these two Books illustrate Mill's kind of philosophical history. In order to have a comprehensive view of Mill's intellectual background, however, we also need to provide some account of Mill's training in the study of Divinity.

ii. Reformation culture in The History of British India

Mill's *History* represents different phases of his intellectual evolution. Three intellectual propensities determined Mill's view of civilisation in general and of Asian societies in particular: puritan rigidity, Scottish philosophical history and Utilitarian principles. James Mill entered Edinburgh University and trained as a preacher.²⁰ His origin and his

²⁰ Mill's education in Divinity was connected with the clan of John Stuart of Fettercairn House. For a biographical sketch of this part of Mill's life, see Bain, *James Mill*, pp. 11ff.

professional training in Protestantism contributed to his view of society and civilisation. He was not inclined to poetry, imaginative things or sensual pleasures. In his view, literary texts, especially poems, did not deserve a distinctive place in the progress of civilisation. On this point, Mill stood in opposition to William Jones and many other Orientalists who admired the high civilisation largely because they admired Asian poetry.²¹ Jones suggested that Oriental civilisation represented the best specimen of imaginative power, while its capacities of reason were inferior to European civilisation.²² In Mill's view, imagination was feeble, uncertain and, above all, purposeless. In his *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind*, Mill suggested that imagination itself was not an idea but a 'train of ideas' that amounts to nothing more than habitual association.²³ In addition, Mill defined imagination as, from the view point of utility, having no purpose. Whereas lawyers' trains of ideas aimed at defending clients, and metaphysicians' and mathematicians' aimed at truth, poetry led 'to nothing beyond itself'. 'Thus we say that Rousseau indulged his imagination', when he claimed that 'the pleasure surpassed every other enjoyment.'²⁴ Weber demonstrated how Protestant culture sees life as instrumental in his celebrated work on the Protestant spirit and capitalism. Mill could hardly appreciate intellectual activities that aimed at no purpose. Thus, the younger Mill was not allowed to regard imagination as pleasurable. He found

²¹ William Jones, *Poems, consisting chiefly of Translation from the Asiatick Languages* (London, 1777), p. 180.

²² William Jones, 'First Discourse in the Asiatick Society', *Asiatick Researches*, i, p. xiii.

²³ James Mill, *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind*, ed. John Stuart Mill (2 vols., London, 1869), i, 239. Alexander Bain corrected Mill's narrowness of viewpoint of imagination. *Ibid.*, pp. 245-246n. Majeed has a good discussion of Mill's distrust of imagination. Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 104, 121, 162-79.

²⁴ Mill, *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind*, i, 242, 243.

consolation in Wordsworth's and Coleridge's poems only after suffering a mental crisis partly caused by the intellectualism resulting from his father's theory of mind and ideas on education.

It is well known that James Mill became irreligious after reading Bentham in 1809. Nevertheless, he remained rigidly intellectual. Leslie Stephen described Mill as a person of 'strict frugality' and 'stern puritanic principle'.²⁵ Indeed, Mill viewed Indian society through the Protestant-like inclinations towards simplicity and rigidity. Mill translated Charles Villers's *An Essay on the Spirit and Influence of the Reformation of Luther* from French into English in 1805. He added lengthy commentaries to the texts in translator's notes. This translation is the most substantial, if not the only, work of Mill, from which Mill's students could understand his thoughts on religion and his idea of progress. Mill explicitly expressed his opinion of the advancement of civilisation in terms of the simplicity evident in Reformation culture. Mill agreed with Dr Hardy of Edinburgh in ascribing religious reforms in different countries to the universal need for simplifying rituals. Hardy argued that 'in various ages and countries the men who have endeavoured to simplify religion, and to throw off superstition, have been supported by the *multitude*.'²⁶ On this statement, Mill commented that 'it was among the rude and unpolished, not the refined and learned part of the Roman people, that the Christian religion, in its native, and perfect simplicity, made its principal progress.'²⁷ Mill's

²⁵ Leslie Stephen, *The English Utilitarians* (2 vols., London, 1900), ii, 1. Berlin described John Stuart Mill as 'intensely serious, and without any trace of fear, vanity or humour.' This description may very well be applied to the elder Mill's personality with little modification. Isaiah Berlin, *John Stuart Mill and the Ends of Life*, (London, 1959), p. 7.

²⁶ Charles Villers, *Reformation of Luther*, p. 56n.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 59n.

Reformation identity not only strongly moulded his view of history, but also drew his attention to the use of languages. One of the most significant accomplishments of the Reformation was the popularisation and nationalisation of vernacular languages. At least on the level of ideology, the application of vernacular languages was a significant symbolic act of the Protestants who were liberated from Catholic institutions and papal evils. In terms of their utility, vernacular languages enabled laymen to read and thus increased literacy. Either from an individual or a social point of view, the vernacular languages could be seen as a liberation from Latin, the language of the learned, of scholars and of priests. Mill was strongly in agreement with Dugald Stewart in linking the vernacular renaissance with the invention of the art of printing. He quoted at length Stewart's highly sociological explanation of the relation of the progress of civilisation and the invention of printing in *Reformation of Luther*.

Above all, Mill agreed with Stewart's philosophy of language that language was an instrument of ideas. This belief helped Mill to defend using the Indian vernacular as the medium for education. In addition, Mill's favouring of vernaculars as an educational medium stemmed from his personal identification with Reformation culture, measuring the utility of a medium from the viewpoint of its utility at the social level. In an article on Ireland, Mill contrasted the educational improvements in Scotland with the poor literacy in that country. The 'Church of Scotland translated the Bible into the language of Highland natives, and the children are taught to read it in their school. This is true pastoral care.'²⁸ Education through vernacular languages was an aspect of the

²⁸ *Edinburgh Review*, (July 1813), p. 364. In the same year Mill published 'School for All' in the *Philanthropist*. This article was to reject the Church authorities' decision to teach nothing but religious doctrines in schools. See W. H. Burston, *James Mill on Education* (Cambridge, 1969).

Reformation. When Mill wrote this article, it was very likely that he had already abandoned his belief in Christian doctrines. Nevertheless, he still identified with the Protestant method of schooling in vernacular languages as a means to social progress. Later in his life, Mill became less optimistic about the progress in India; but was still loyal to this view of education in vernaculars as against Anglicisation.

On every account I consider the improvement of the natives in education as an object of paramount importance; and that it ought to be forwarded by every possible means. I am of opinion, however, that the progress of education among them, so as to produce any very perceptible effect will be exceedingly slow. With respect to the English language making its way among a people so numerous, dispersed over so great a country, the number of Englishmen mixing with them so small, and the occasions of their feeling strongly the need of the English language so few; under these circumstances any very general diffusion of the English language among the natives of India, I think, is to be despaired of. ... by becoming acquainted with English literature, they [the Indians] would have a chance of having their understandings better enlightened; but that advantage, I think, is likely to be attained more speedily and extensively by the translation of European books into their own languages.²⁹ [emphasis added]

Indeed, many Scottish thinkers or moral philosophers, such as Stewart, and clergymen, such as Robertson and Ferguson, emphasised the importance of the link between the Reformation and the art of printing. Stewart particularly appreciated Luther's reformation because it corrected errors and exposed prejudices: it was 'a general diffusion of knowledge in gradually clearing truth from that admixture of error'.³⁰ Due to his background in the study of Divinity, Mill was confident and optimistic about the universality of Reformation culture, particularly with regard to its impact on social improvement. The longing for rapid reform drove the post-1789 generation to be concerned with how things ought to be. In Mill's mind, the art of

²⁹ *Parliamentary Papers* (1831-2), ix. 55, 56. For a short but useful discussion of British language policy in India in 1830s, see K. A. Ballhatchet, 'The Home Government and Bentinck's Education Policy', *Cambridge Historical Journal* (1951), pp. 224-9.

³⁰ *Collected Works of Dugald Stewart*, i, 506.

printing and the Reformation were not incidental 'events', but, rather, parts of the rational and inevitable progress of human society. He did not hesitate to view the non-European world from the perspective of this unique phenomenon in western history. Mill's uncompromising criticism of the Brahman caste was grounded on such an interpretation of European Reformation culture. Mill identified the Brahmanism as 'the most complete system of priestcraft'. Mill professed that while Christianity was the embodiment of toleration, modesty, rationality and simplicity, Hinduism was 'frivolous, disgusting and irrational'.³¹

It is also worth noticing that because Mill was more concerned with the power relationship between the clergymen and the believers, than with doctrines, he was able to compare Catholicism and Hinduism. Mill saw religion as a social institution, which was significant in that it allowed considerable power to be exerted by a group of men over the rest of people in that society. Catholic and Hindu priests were prone to criticism because they monopolised knowledge, and supposedly, controlled the minds of the believers. That is to say that Mill tended to reduce religion to the clergyman's exercise of power over his followers. After he became irreligious, Mill's reductionism of religion became even more evident. In a memorandum instructing young Thomas Hodgkin how to observe religion in Germany, Mill pointed out what should be paid attention to. 'What are rulers of the priests; & the revenues of the church? How is religion taught to the people? That is, what is the character & behaviour of the parish-priests? And how do the people seem to be governed by their doctrines? little or much? What toleration is there

³¹ *The Philanthropist*, 3 (1813), 255, 259. Certainly, by Christianity Mill meant Protestantism, rather than Catholicism.

by law or in practice ...'³² In short, Mill was interested in the social force that religion could produce to influence and govern people. Thus, Mill criticised Hindu priestcraft no less than Hindu scripts.

iii. Masculine culture and the superiority of Muslim society

Mill thought that rationality was superior to imagination, and simplicity to elaboration. Although he argued for commerce, his notions of cultural life were certainly not in line with, to use Pocock's words, the feminine characteristics of commercial society. Mill's predilection for culture and civilisation was much saturated with the Fergusonian language of virtue, vigour and vitality. In contrast to many eighteenth-century writers, who preferred the soft manners of the Hindus to the gross ones of the Muslims, Mill preferred the latter. It has been shown that Dow, Campbell, and some other *Edinburgh* reviewers admired the docility of the Hindus, Mill did not.

In point of address and temper, the Mahomedan is less soft, less smooth and winning than the Hindu. Of course, he is not so well liked by his lord and master the Englishman; who desires to have nothing more to do with him, than to receive his obedience. In truth, the Hindu, like the Eunuch, excels in the qualities of a slave. The indolence, the security, the pride of the despot, political or domestic, find less to hurt them in the obedience of the Hindu, than in that of almost any other portion of the species. But if less soft, the Mahomedan is more manly, more vigorous. He more nearly resembles our own half-civilized ancestors; who though more rough, were not more gross; though less supple in behaviour, were still more susceptible of increased civilization, than a people in the state of the Hindus.³³

Many *Edinburgh* reviewers had believed that soft manners of Hindus were proof of their superiority over the Muslims. Mill held that individual liberty, power and force were characteristics of civilisation. Mill went so far as to imply that military victory meant a

³² Letter from James Mill to Francis Place, 17 May 1817, BL MSS Add. 35153, ff.2-5.

³³ Mill, *History*, ii, 365-6.

high stage of civilization.³⁴

Mill argued for the superiority of the Muslims over the Hindus by maintaining that vigour of mind was the result of civilisation and that docility was symptom of despotism. And that was the reason why Indian civilisation was retarded. O'Brien points out that Montesquieu was the 'common parent' of Scottish philosophical historians.³⁵ But this parenthood needs to be qualified. With regard to Asian societies, many Scottish 'philosophical' or sociological historians were in agreement with Voltaire's concern with a regular and orderly government in the high culture of Asian nations. On the other hand, many writers of the late Scottish Enlightenment were more sympathetic to Montesquieu's opinions, particularly his views on despotism. Among the late Enlightenment writers, Mill was a prominent example. In a review of Thomas Staunton's translation of Chinese penal laws, Mill simply recapitulated Montesquieu's ideas on Chinese government and Oriental despotism. 'The source of every thing in that vast empire is fear; the end of every thing, tranquillity.'³⁶ Mill believed, as Montesquieu before him, that despotism was an essential factor in the 'degraded' social morality of the Indians.

That the root was laid in the corruptive operation of the despotism to which, in all ages, the people had been subject, admits of no dispute, and stands in need of no explanation. The important inquiry to which we are summoned is: why the British regulations, intended for the abatement of delinquency, had been so unfortunate as to increase rather than diminish it.³⁷

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 339-40.

³⁵ K. O'Brien, 'Between Enlightenment and stadial history: William Robertson on the history of Europe', pp. 53-63

³⁶ *The Eclectic Review*, 6 (1810), 1027.

³⁷ Mill, *History*, v, 394.

Mill's lament was probably a response to Napoleon's and Wellesley's plan for a military despotism in India. But the real point is that Mill believed that the eradication of despotism should be the object of British administrative reform. This is one point where Mill differed considerably from the Orientalists and military officials in India, who had argued that the best and most expedient political structure for Indian society was a despotic one.³⁸ On the other hand, Mill believed that Indian society could break through the stages of European historical progress from feudalism, to despotism and then to limited monarchy. Mill believed that the process could be broken because education could open the mind and accelerate the progress of civilisation. Mill agreed with Adam Smith that 'despotism is more destructive of leisure and security, and more adverse to the progress of the human mind, than anarchy itself'.³⁹ The most evident sign of Hindu despotism was its theocracy: religion and the state co-ordinated control of politics and the human minds. Mill described the Indian constitution as theocratical. He criticised William Jones for suggesting that Hindu governmental despotism was restricted by laws and mutually checked by religion. Mill claimed that Hindu political despotism was 'confirmed [both] by laws and Divine authority'.

And we have seen that by a system of priestcraft, built upon the most enormous and tormenting superstition that ever harassed and degraded any portion of mankind, their minds were enchained more intolerably than their bodies; in short, that despotism and priestcraft taken together, the Hindus, in mind and body, were the most enslaved portion

³⁸ McLaren argues that Thomas Munro, John Malcolm and Mountstuart Elphinstone all believed that despotism was 'a necessary political stage through which states passed on their passage from feudalism to limited monarchy'. Martha McLaren, 'From Analysis to Prescription: Scottish Concepts of Asian Despotism in Early Nineteenth-Century British India', *International History Review*, 15 (1993), 469-501; at p. 477. Majeed also implies that Mill supported a 'despotic rule' in India before the Indians were able to govern themselves. Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings*, p. 136.

³⁹ Mill, *History*, ii, 163-4.

of the human race.⁴⁰

On the other hand, Islamic laws and government were more comparable to western principles in respecting individual liberty. 'Under Mahomedan sovereigns, the alliance between the Church and state is much less complete'. 'Roman, English and Mahomedan laws are not very different in the level of individual rights'. Because government and laws were the most distinct achievements of society and civilisation, Islamic society was superior to Hindus. Mill asserted that 'the nations, in the western parts of Asia; the Persians, the Arabians, and even the Turks; possessed a degree of intellectual faculties rather higher than the nations situated beyond them toward the East'.⁴¹ Mill made such statements possibly because he wanted to emphasise that 'distance' contributed more to Europeans' imagination than any close inspection of Asian societies would allow. He might be also implying that the closer any judicial and religious institution was to its Roman and Christian counterpart, the more liberal and civilised that society would be. More important, the counter-discourse of the Muslims' superiority over the Hindus would also contribute to Mill's later theory of the semi-barbarism of Asian societies. And it was on the ground of this specific theory that Mill formulated his reform projects for India. In contrast to Campbell, who supported Hindu superiority as this justified Wellesley's military actions against Tipu, Mill described Tipu's ordered government in rebuking the British government in India.

The fact, however, was, that when the English advanced into the dominions of Tippoo, they discovered such indications of good government as altogether surprised them; a country highly cultivated, and abounding in population; in short, a prosperity far surpassing that which any other part of India exhibited, not excepting the British dominions themselves. ... The fidelity with which his people adhered to him under the

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, i, 124-5; ii, 132.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, ii, 338.

most trying reverses of fortune, would have done honour to the most [sic] and beneficent prince. Not an instance of treachery occurred amongst his commanders during the whole course of the war. His troops, with the exception of the men who had been cruelly dragged from the conquered countries, though disheartened by a constant succession of disasters, fought with constancy to the last. The people of the ceded countries yielded as to inevitable fate; but no sooner did an opportunity occur, than they replaced themselves with eagerness under the government of Tippoo.

As the English over-rated the vices of Tippoo, so they greatly over-rated his power and consequence, as an enemy. ... But Tippoo was a braggart, and talked so loftily of his own power, and with so much contempt of the power of the English, that he both hurt their pride, and awakened their apprehensions.⁴²

Tipu or the Muslim empire represented vigour, power, force, despotism and regularity, while the Hindu represented softness, imbecility and theocracy. In Mill's mind, the latter was the worst mode of despotism. The former culture conquered the latter, as the former society was ahead of the latter on the scale of civilisation. By emphasising the force of vigour and government, Mill justified Muslim imperial success in India. By so doing, the progress of history was rationalised.

Mill did not foresee that his idea of the progress of history embodied in military victory and powerful government would lead to misunderstandings. Many of Mill's contemporaries and modern critics thought Mill was too contemptuous of the Hindus. They thought that Mill had exaggerated the backwardness of Indian society and the advancement of Muslim society. To this charge, Mill replied 'Now assuredly I am not prejudiced against them [Hindus], for never was there a human being more anxious to do them good, but I am convinced that a true estimate of the state of their civilization, & of the stage which they reached in the progress from simplicity & rudeness to refinement is an essential condition to the adoption of the manners which are best calculated to do them good'.⁴³ Perhaps, Mill exaggerated his belief in Hindu backwardness for polemical

⁴² *Ibid.*, v, 324-5.

⁴³ Letter from James Mill to Walker, 5 Oct. 1819, NLS MSS 13724, ff. 132-133v; ff. 132v-3. See also the

reasons. But he certainly held certain prejudices or standards for the advancement of civilisation. His ideas of political personality and civil society in preference to order, vigour and fighting were certainly responsible for the way he compared Hindu and Muslim societies.

iv. James Mill's ideas of history and progress

The second intellectual tradition within which Mill was trained to understand the world was Scottish philosophical history. Forbes pointed out that Mill's *History* was in line with the genre of Scottish historical or sociological studies.⁴⁴ Since his student days at Edinburgh, Mill had been an avid reader of the works of Smith, Hume, Ferguson, Kames and many other Scottish literati.⁴⁵ Even when he was in London, Mill kept a close eye on Scottish publications. He was familiar with Thomas Brown's philosophy of mind. He probably knew about Villers's works through the *Edinburgh Review* when Brown first reviewed Villers's work on Kant in the journal. Mill also reviewed Millar's *Ranks* for the *Literary Journal* in 1806.⁴⁶ He enthusiastically recommended Millar's works to Ricardo. In fact, Millar's works had an important place in Mill's family curriculum. John Stuart Mill confessed to Napier that he had long known Millar's writings.⁴⁷ To be sure, James Mill read works of the Scottish Enlightenment with Stewartian optimism. Mill had great sympathy for Stewart's cry against the human follies which obstructed the road

Appendix in this thesis.

⁴⁴ Duncan Forbes, 'James Mill and India', pp. 25, 27.

⁴⁵ Bain, *James Mill*, pp. 14-8.

⁴⁶ *Literary Journal* (2nd Series, Jan. 1806), i, 628ff.

⁴⁷ *Selection from the Correspondence of the late Macvey Napier*, p. 510. Letter from John Stuart Mill to Napier, 20 Oct. 1845.

to rapid progress.⁴⁸ That was the reason why Mill felt particularly sympathetic to some of Millar's and Robertson's works, for these works demonstrated a more distinct and confident attitude towards progress or general improvement than, say, Kames's or Ferguson's works. Apart from the *History of America*, Mill was impressed by Robertson's work, particularly his *History of Charles V*. Progress was the key note in his historical writings, most succinctly presented in the famed Preface, 'A View of the State and the Progress of Europe'. Phillipson argues, however, that Robertson's idea of progress was providential. Futurity was not an immediate concern for Robertson, nor for many other Scots of the Enlightenment, such as Ferguson.⁴⁹ On the other hand, in the post French Revolution context, Mill deliberately contrasted Robertson's idea of progress with Burke's conservatism, or, in Mill's words, rhapsody. In his *Reflections*, Burke claimed that 'the age of chivalry is gone. - That of sophists, economists, and calculators, has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever ... The unbought grace of life, the cheap defence of nations, the nurse of manly sentiment and of heroic enterprise is gone.' Mill resorted to Robertson's authority in order to renounce such counter-revolutionary sentiments. He lauded Robertson as a 'judicious and accurate' historian for his idea of progress and he often quoted Robertson's words at length. 'The provisions of the feudal policy for the interior order and tranquillity of society were extremely defective'. 'To these pernicious effects of the feudal anarchy may be added its fatal influence on the character and improvement of the human mind'.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ See Ch. 2, note 177.

⁴⁹ N. T. Phillipson, 'Providence and Progress: an introduction to the historical thought of William Robertson', *William Robertson and the Expansion of Empire* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 55-73.

⁵⁰ Villers, *Reformation of Luther*, p. 73n.

Indeed, explanations of modernity and the decline of feudal society were a common theme in the works of many Enlightenment Scots.⁵¹

For a similar reason, Mill felt particularly akin to Millar's work because of Millar's relatively strong confidence in the natural human longing for improvement.

It ought, at the same time to be remembered, that, how poor and wretched soever the aspect of human nature in this early state, it contains the seeds of improvement, which, by long care and culture, are capable of being brought to maturity; so that the lower its primitive condition, it requires the greater exertions of labour and activity, and calls for a more extensive operation of those wonderful powers and faculties, which, in a gradual progression from such rude beginnings, have led to the noblest discoveries in art or science, and to the most exalted refinement of taste and manners.⁵²

Change and futurity took centre stage in Mill's theory of the human mind. Despite being a diligent and excellent student of Greek, Mill held no notion of the cyclical progress of history.⁵³ The forward-looking optimism in Mill's idea of progress propelled him to formulate reform projects in British India in order to lead Indian society on the march towards civilisation more quickly than it would be able to achieve under the existing regime.

Mill's view of Scottish philosophical history was tinted with some prescriptive implications. For example, Millar maintained that in feudal society, men regarded nothing worthy of pursuing but military honour.⁵⁴ Mill went further and posited the Millarian feudal customs in Europe as universal phenomena. Having reversed Millar's causal explanation of the love of chivalry in feudal society, Mill was able to invent a new

⁵¹ Peter Burke, 'Scottish Historians and the Feudal System: the Conceptualisation of Social Change', *Studies in Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 191 (1980), 537-9.

⁵² Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, pp. 45-6.

⁵³ Mill's friends even encouraged him to apply for the chair of Greek at Edinburgh University just before he was appointed the Assistant Examiner in India House.

⁵⁴ Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, pp. 73.

formula of social development: 'in the history of society, it will be generally found, that the rank and influence of the military order are high, in proportion as the civilisation of the people is low.'⁵⁵ Not surprisingly, Mill employed this universal formula to describe Indian society.

From this circumstance it has been rashly concluded, that feudal conditions of military service, in fact a feudal government, nearly resembling that which existed in Europe, had place in Hindustan. ... the people are much accustomed to terminate their own disputes, by their own cunning, or force, that the number of applications for judicature is comparatively small.⁵⁶

Mill's view of women's rank in society, on the other hand, was closer to that of William Alexander than that of Millar. Millar claimed that women's ranks advanced with the progress of commerce as men's manners softened. But further, he held that manners were diversified in civilised societies, and that barbarous customs could exist in a commercial society. Millar argued that in the progress of civilisation in different countries, some various 'accidental causes' have contributed 'to accelerate, or to retard this advancement'. Consequently, 'this appears to have occasioned some of the chief varieties which take place in the maxims and customs of nations equally civilized'.⁵⁷ Mill turned against Millar's cause and effect formula. He agreed with William Alexander that, from observing women's condition, one could determine the state of any society. 'The history of uncultivated nations uniformly represents the women as in a state of abject slavery, from which they slowly emerge, as civilization advances'.⁵⁸ Mill further remarked that the Peruvian, Tartarian, Arabian, Guinean and Chinese excluded

⁵⁵ Mill, *History*, i, 134.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 147.

⁵⁷ Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, pp. 4-5.

⁵⁸ Mill, *History*, i, 309.

their wives from 'the inheritance of the family: being condemned to severe and perpetual labour, they are themselves regarded as useful property.' In addition, they all practised some general customs such as buying wives. Social manners and jurisprudence indicated that such societies were in a low development of civilisation.⁵⁹

It seems that as more information about non-European societies arrived in Europe, the younger generation tried even harder than their predecessors to systematise all this information into a single theory. In the process, they developed views that were less historicist than those of their predecessors, and their increased confidence that they had identified the correct relations of cause and effect bolstered their efforts to base reform projects on their historical theories.

v. The history of the human mind: clear and distinct ideas

The most characteristic intellectual propensity in Mill's *History* was his unrelenting pursuit of clear and distinct ideas, which coloured his view of history and the human mind. Mill agreed with Robertson that the stage of civilisation reached by any society was in proportion to the maturity of the human mind. For Mill, the human mind was not only a passive receiver of the world-experiences, but also played an active role in making civilisation.⁶⁰ More often than not Mill would equate the maturity of the human mind with the degree of civilisation. The backwardness of Indian society, in Mill's mind, could be linked to the capacity of its collective mind. 'Among them [the Hindus] the

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 310, 311ff.

⁶⁰ Mill praised 'the philosophy of the human mind', another name for 'the science of human nature', as 'the most important of all the branches of science'. *Literary Journal*, 1 (Jan. 1806), 112; *Essay on Education*, p. 5.

strength of the human mind has never been sufficient to recommend effectually the preservation, by writing, of the memory of judicial decisions'.⁶¹

Mill placed strong confidence in didactic ways of enlightenment. Education was most urgently called for when the human mind under the influence of prejudices was ignorant of what was better for itself. Mill believed that the savage 'treats the thoughts and actions of all other men with contempt, and regards the very idea of a change with supreme detestation. The barbarian, the rude and uncivilised inhabitant of every climate, approaches, in this respect, to the prejudice of the savage.'⁶² In Mill's view, nations that regarded 'the very idea of a change with supreme detestation' were enemies of enlightenment, and they necessarily exhibited a certain degree of barbarity. Indians and Chinese were found guilty of this failing because of their contempt for change and, particularly, for western ideas. Mill would agree with Grant's conclusion that the Brahmins had 'determined opposition to innovation'.⁶³ According to John Barrow, the Chinese were also not at all impressed by western technology. In 1816, on a occasion of reviewing works about Amherst's embassy to China, Mill claimed that China's attitude towards western civilisation was no better than what had been found in Macartney's first embassy in 1793-94. In commenting on the latest voyage to China, Mill prophesied,

The language, the science, and religion of Europe, would prove a blessing to all ranks; and the period is perhaps not very distant when the Celestial Empire shall derive illumination from those whom they now esteem the barbarians of the West, and when the Son of Heaven and Lord of all the Sovereigns of the Earth shall perform the ko-tou to those very persons whom he now chooses to denominate his vassals and tribute-

⁶¹ Mill, *History*, i, 192ff, 199.

⁶² *The Eclectic Review*, 7 (1817), 556.

⁶³ Grant, *Observations*, p. 82.

The emphasis of the importance of education is related to Mill's belief that the mind *per se* was the engine of social progress. For Mill the human mind was the starting point of civilisation. In his *Essay on Education*, Mill argued that the whole science of human nature was only a branch of the science of education. Many Scots literati, including Robertson, conceived of historical progress as spontaneously generated orders. In such a view of progress, history moved on a track independently of the level of human consciousness. The mind of history, as it were, was not comprehensible to the mind of humans. Individuals could only observe and grasp historical phenomena, through a Skinnerian impulse/reaction mechanism. The black box of the mind of decision making was unknown to historical observers. This, however, was not Mill's own conception of history. Distinct from the Enlightenment's historicist view of the human mind, Mill suggested that the human mind was composed not only of knowledge but also of consciousness and will. To Mill, to understand history was absolutely identical with

⁶⁴ *The British Review*, 11 (1818), 164. In retrospect, Mill was virtually right in this confidence in western science and technology, which brought the importance of western languages to their zenith. The Chinese elite cared little about western material achievements because they thought the Chinese Empire was self-sufficient under its current system. Because of China's national pride, the ruling elite had a great distaste for western technology, the literati and the state alike. Western technology was resentfully called *chi-ji-yin-chiao*, fabulous technique and excessive skills. Only after the second Anglo-French alliance war against China in 1865 - not after the Opium War (1840-41) - did the Chinese elite believe that it was crucial to learn western *chi-ji-yin-chiao*. Only after the Sino-Japanese war in 1895, was the Chinese government half-reluctantly convinced that national wealth and strength could not be gained simply by technology without political reform. And, finally, only after the First World War, did a new generation of Chinese youth believe that the only way to redeem China was to have a cultural renewal by introducing western literature, science and democracy. It took a half-century for the British to convince Chinese people that western science and wealth far surpassed those of China. It took yet another half century for the Chinese elite to come to terms with western power and science before the Communist Party which was established in 1921 and came to power in 1949. It is puerile to state that the modern Chinese predicament and loss of confidence is rooted in the incurable prejudices of self-regard which Mill described as 'the savage'. Nevertheless, the Chinese elite and their vested interests in expelling foreign ideas were the freeway to the three phases of Chinese modernisation, from learning western technique, to emulating political reform, and then to acquiring western literature, ideas and culture.

understanding civilisation, which was, in turn, to understand the state of the human mind. But the human mind was not only a passive receptor of social experiences. It was also an active mechanism in the civilising process. Thus, Mill admitted the important role of 'motive' in making social progress. For Mill, there were two seminal factors contributing to the improvement of agriculture: the motivation to make exertions and the knowledge to direct those exertions.⁶⁵ Instead of emphasising agricultural improvement resulting from external and social mechanisms, such as the division of labour or capital, Mill stressed instead the importance of internal factors of a psychological and intellectual kind that encouraged exertion in social life. The capacities, abilities and willingness of human agents were equally decisive in making social progress. Mill maintained that social progress corresponded to the progress of the human mind.

... it is education wholly which constitutes the remarkable difference between the Turk and the Englishman, and even the still more remarkable difference between the most cultivated European and the wildest savages. Whatever is made of any *class* of men, we may then be sure is possible to be made of the whole human race.⁶⁶

Because Mill believed in the role of the human will and self-consciousness in making civilisation, he did not sympathise with Montesquieu's environmental determinism. Denouncing human irrationality, Mill assumed that a savage acted only according to what 'he himself has been accustomed to think and to do'. Expressed in a Robertsonian manner, Mill described savages as 'listless and indolent under every climate'. In short, Mill was antagonistic to any form of determinism. And this is the reason he was a staunch exponent of reform.

⁶⁵ *Edinburgh Review* (April 1809), p. 23. Mill also suggested that both of them should be protected by laws, *ibid.*, p. 24.

⁶⁶ Robertson would say that the human mind progressed with the advancement of social conditions. Mill, 'Article of Education', *Essays* (Bristol, 1992), pp. 3, 9.

According to Mill's intellectualism, the advancement of the human mind was embodied in its capacity to pursue clear ideas, to distinguish right from wrong. Above all, Mill thought that the practice of historiography was the best example of the maturity of the mind. Again, Mill's seeking after clear and distinct ideas was inspired by his mentor at Edinburgh, Dugald Stewart, who was, in turn, influenced by Smith's philosophical inquiry into the origin of languages. In his *History*, Mill quoted Stewart's words about the progress of language to illustrate the advancement of the human mind and civilisation. He argued that Indian mythology and history were a product of a mind, which was incapable of analysis and, thus, indulged in speculation and ambiguity.

The highest abstractions are not the last result of mental culture, and intellectual strength; it is discovered, that some of our most general and comprehensive notions are formed at that very early period, when the mind, with little discriminating power, is apt to lump together things which have but few points of resemblance; and that we break down these genera into species more and more minute in proportion as our knowledge becomes more extensive, more particular, and precise. The propensity to abstract speculations is then the natural result of the state of the human mind in a rude and ignorant age.⁶⁷

Likewise, Mill thought that historiography was a mental faculty of analysis, which aimed at particularity and precision, rather than speculation. He agreed with Ferguson that historiography was a symbol of 'intellectual maturity'. In Mill's view, intellectual maturity and discriminating power were the same thing; both meant distinguishing facts from fables. Mill agreed with Jones that both the Persians and Hindus were fond of and good at poetry. Whereas Jones thought that the art of poetry belonged to the faculty of imagination, which was by no means inferior to the arts of memory and reason, belonging to the faculties of memory and reason respectively, Mill certainly thought that

⁶⁷ Mill, *History*, ii, 55. See also Dugald Stewart, *Element of the Philosophy of Human Mind*, ii, note B.

the faculty of reason was prior to or more advanced than that of imagination. And the development of historiography did not mean the development of memory, but science or reason.

... the human mind must have a certain degree of culture, before the value of such a memorial is perceived. ... Exaggeration, therefore, is more fitted to his [the barbarian's] desires than exactness; and poetry than history. ... All rude nations, even those to whom the use of letters has long been familiar, neglect history, and are gratified with the productions of the mythologists and poets.⁶⁸

Indeed, Mill's overall view of culture was a positivist one, suggesting that the advancement of civilisation resulted from analysis, science and facts, not from acquaintance with 'all its mystical and allegorical meaning, to read all its commentaries and paraphrases'.⁶⁹ From such an insistence on the importance of the factual, all the Egyptians, Hindus and Persians whose historical writings were composed of 'extravagant fables' were considered crude in terms of civilisation.⁷⁰

In addition, Robertson's *History of Scotland* proved to Mill the validity of his argument about the relation of historiography and civilisation. Robertson presented his *History of Scotland* as a seminal example that embodied the eighteenth-century ideas of progress. From the very outset, Robertson suggested that 'The first ages of Scottish history are dark and fabulous. Nations, as well as men, arrive at maturity by degrees, and the events, which happened during their infancy or early youth, cannot be recollected, and deserve not to be remembered.'⁷¹ Echoing such a Robertsonian idea of ancient

⁶⁸ Mill, *ibid.*, 46-7. Similarly, 'The offspring of a wild and ungoverned imagination, they mark the state of a rude and credulous people, whom the marvellous delights; who cannot estimate the use of a record of past events; and whose imagination the real occurrences of life are too familiar to engage.' *Ibid.*, i, 115-6..

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, ii, 54.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 48-50.

⁷¹ Quoted from Karen O'Brien, *Narratives of Enlightenment*, p. 101. See also William Robertson, *History of Scotland* (16th edn., London, 1802), i, 201.

fabulous history, Mill maintained that the Hindus' accounts of history, 'among all other barbarous histories, could help the civilized people little', and therefore, 'we have perhaps but little to regret in the total absence of Hindu records'.⁷² One of the reasons why Mill believed Muslim society was more advanced than Hindu society was that the former was more conscious of its history. Mill suggested that the Hindu text of Puranas was a product of imagination, not of history: 'the Hindus cannot produce a single historical composition; while the Mohametans of the same country have amply and even ably illustrated all the events subsequent to their entrance into Hindustan'.⁷³ The advancement of historiography was regarded by Mill as a major part of the advancement of civilisation because it indicated the progress of the human mind in pursuing clear and distinct ideas. Indeed, Mill believed that the more certain historical records that a nation held, the more civilised that nation was.

It is also within the framework of the pursuit of clear and distinct idea that Mill looked at Hinduism. Mill believed that the progress of religion was from pantheism to deism, and finally to theism. He suggested that Hinduism had not yet reached the stage

⁷² Mill, *History*, i, 119.

⁷³ *Edinburgh Review* (Oct. 1809), p. 176. *The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals* suggests that this article was probably contributed by Alexander Hamilton. Rocher agrees with this speculation. It is very doubtful, however, whether an Orientalist and a great sympathiser with Hindu society such as Hamilton would make a statement like this. The article goes so far as to express that 'Their [Indians'] boasted civilisation has rather been asserted than proved; neither their literature nor their arts indicate any considerable progress in the pursuits which refine and adorn mankind; and some of their customs betray a ferocity scarcely to be found amongst the most savage nations.' *Ibid.*, pp. 175-6. The criticism of Indian civilisation is truly incongruent with Hamilton's general admiration of Hindu literature and society that I have discussed in the previous chapters, but very much in accordance with Mill's view of Muslim superiority over Hinduism. Moreover, this review article shows no evidence that the author has acquired much knowledge of Sanskrit or any other Asian languages. I believe that this essay was written by Mill. Probably because of Mill's encroachment on Hamilton's specific field, Hamilton felt reluctant to write review articles for the *Edinburgh Review* after 1810. Rocher suggests that Hamilton virtually stopped contributing articles for the *Review* because he was disappointed by the fact that the British public were more interested in politics than literature. Rocher, *Alexander Hamilton*, p. 101.

of recognising the one and Supreme Being. The worshipping of the one almighty God in Hindu texts, Mill asserted, was but a pretence. 'The Hindu ideas are so loose, vague, and uncertain'.⁷⁴ In opposition to Hinduism, Islam was, for Mill, more advanced because the latter's doctrines were more 'rational and simple'.⁷⁵ It was for this reason that Isaiah Berlin described James Mill as 'the last of the great *raisonneurs* of the eighteenth century'. Mill's strong belief in intellectualism seemed to push Newtonian rationalism to its limits.⁷⁶ Indeed, Mill virtually reduced religion to a manifestation of the human mind.

The presentation to the human mind of the clear and distinct was still more explicit in Mill's notion of legal institutions. In a review article on Bexon's *Code de la Legislation Pénale*, Mill positively stated that the ideas of clearness and distinctness were the criteria of civilisation.

Of all qualities in a legislator, the faculty of defining with clearness and accuracy, of marking strongly in words the boundary of the legal prescription, so that all men may, as certainly as possible, distinguish the actions which it includes, and the actions which it does not include, is one of the greatest importance. A vague law, as far as its vagueness extends, is not merely equivalent to the absence of law, but is a great deal worse. It leaves the power of the judge arbitrary, and covers the arbitrary exercise of that power with the semblance of law.⁷⁷

This statement was meant to uphold a Utilitarian code of laws. Moreover, it read like a manifesto as it proclaimed that 'clearness and accuracy' was a great indicator of the advancement of society. Languages, history and laws were required to be as clear and distinct as possible. An overriding concern with the clear and distinct should be linked to

⁷⁴ Mill, *History*, i, 238, 264n.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, i, 264. Obviously, this is because Muslims adopted the Christian idea of the Supreme Being.

⁷⁶ Isaiah Berlin, *John Stuart Mill and the End of Life*, p. 5.

⁷⁷ *Edinburgh Review*, (Oct 1809), pp. 107-8.

Mill's understanding of Reformation culture, which was understood by him as simple and progressive.

vi. Cartesian and positivist historiography

Mill's method of historical writing was derived from his idea of historical progress and his concerns with the clear and distinct. Gooch's celebrated work, *History and Historians of the Nineteenth Century*, predictably centring on Leopold von Ranke, the father of the scientific approach to history, discusses James Mill very little.⁷⁸ As has been shown in the Preface of this study, Mill's ideas on historical study were an object of mockery or criticism for many modern scholars. From Collingwood's point of view, Mill could be thought of as a Cartesian historian who thought that reading ancient literature and fables was as good as travelling in foreign counties. But, as Descartes maintained, 'when one employs too much time in travelling, one becomes a stranger in one's own country'. On remarking that historical knowledge was worthy of studying only when it could have truth, Descartes remarked:

Besides, fables make one imagine many events possible which in reality are not so, and even the most accurate of histories, if they do not exactly misrepresent or exaggerate the value of things in order to render them more worthy of being read, at least omit in them all the circumstances which are basest and least notable; and from this fact it follows that what is retained is not portrayed as it really is ...⁷⁹

⁷⁸ G. P. Gooch, *History and Historians of the Nineteenth Century* (2nd edn., London, 1952), p. 287.

⁷⁹ René Descartes, *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, tr. E. S. Haldane and G. R. T. Ross (2vols., Cambridge, 1967), i, 84-5. Descartes was here setting up a distinction between poetry and science. The former was aimed at imagination, the latter at truth. In terms of this Cartesian distinction of imagination and truth, as poetry or arts v. science, Mill's positivist historiography claimed that history belonged to science, rather than to the arts.

Collingwood argued that, although Descartes himself was unsympathetic towards history, his rationalism and scepticism actually encouraged a critical historiography. A Cartesian historiography operated according to three principles. First, 'no authority must induce us to believe what we know cannot have happened'. Second, 'different authorities must be confronted with each other and harmonized'. And, last, 'written authorities must be checked by the use of non-literary authority'.⁸⁰ All of these rules promoting a critical spirit can be found in Mill's *History*. In his Preface, Mill described his Indian history as 'A Critical History', or 'a judging history'. The main objective of that history was to judge 'matters' and 'evidence' in order to distinguish what was 'really done, said and thought' from what was really mythological. Therefore, the best historian of India was the one who could best discern the correct evidence from the fallacious.⁸¹ Mill was particularly sceptical about the validity of evidence given by authors of non-European countries. For example, William Jones tried to extract facts from mythology, because he believed that there were truths and genuine historical facts buried in the obscurity of mythology. Mill did not look favourably upon Jones's painstaking efforts to seek truth in the clouds of mythology.

Undoubtedly, if we assume to ourselves the licence of giving to the Hindu mythology a meaning to suit our own views, we may form out of it not only a sublime theology, but a sublime philosophy, or any thing we please. ... As the traditions of Pagan mythology were variously related, the sacred interpreters were at liberty to select the most convenient circumstances; and as they translated an arbitrary cipher, they could extract from *any* fable *any* sense which was adapted to their favourite system of religion and philosophy.⁸²

⁸⁰ R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford, 1946), p. 62.

⁸¹ Mill, *History*, i, pp. xviii-xix.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 263-4. Emphases in original.

Even in Millar's sociological history, ancient fables or medieval romances were thought to be semi-truths. For instance, Millar suggested that the Gothic romance was often prone to the 'excessive propensity to exaggeration, and turn for the marvellous, which prevailed in those ages of darkness and superstition'.⁸³ Millar proclaimed, nevertheless, that though Greek mythologies 'are evidently mixed with fable, and appear to contain much exaggeration', they need not be destitute of 'real foundation'.⁸⁴ Like Kames, Millar held, probably reluctantly, that Ossianic poems contained some truth. Mill, on the other hand, was very cautious about the correctness of ancient or reported evidence. In a review of Bentley's *A Historical View of the Hindu Astronomy*, Mill agreed with the author in repudiating the marvellous hyperbole suggesting a Hindu antiquity of 60,000 years. Mill concluded that 'We have had literary forgeries in Europe, but for number, flagrancy, and ingenuity, the Brahmins are unrivalled.'⁸⁵

Although Mill's ideas on historical writing had much in common with Cartesian historiography as defined by Collingwood, Mill's reflections on historiography had their own peculiarities. Three points deserve further explanation. First, it is interesting to see that Mill's historical method attempted a cross-examination of the available evidence. It has been shown that Mill explicitly compared historians with judges, for they were both attempting impartial investigation of evidence. Like Cartesian historians, Mill suggested that reports could only be valuable when examiners were able to discern people's tones and gestures when giving testimony. As he put it in a letter to Alexander Walker:

I see that they [Walker's descriptions of Indian society] are the immediate unvarnished

⁸³ Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, p. 82.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁸⁵ *Westminster Review* (July 1824), p. 279.

transcript of your mind, the exact copy of your feelings & opinions at the moment; which are a far more valuable source of evidence to me than the most laboured discussions which your genius could produce; as the judge gathers more from the unpremeditated tones, looks & gestures of the witness, than he does from his words. The immediate results of the recollection of gentlemen from India of men of feeling & of understanding combined, are the materials by which I can best supply the disadvantage of not having been there, & by which I become as near as possible a percipient witness of the people whom I wish so truly to understand.⁸⁶

But it was still difficult for Mill to decide to what extent the tones and gestures in the giving of evidence should be considered. James Mill did not alter much his opinion about Indian society, even after he had learned from Walker's personal experiences in India.⁸⁷ Having read Mill's second edition of the *History*, Walker complained 'I cannot but think that you still estimate the Hindu civilization a great deal too low'.⁸⁸

From a modern scholar's point of view, Walker's complaint deserves further attention. By 'too low', Walker meant that Indian society in the early nineteenth century was ahead of English society in the fourteenth century. Mill replied to Walker that he thought of Indian society as less civilised than Henry IV's time. In a letter to Walker, Mill explained that the reason for using Henry IV's regime as the standard against which Indian society ought to be measured was that there was not yet a precise idea or language for describing the degree of civilisation a society had reached. In the absence of an objective tool to measure various degrees of development and civilisation, a comparative method was called for.

⁸⁶ Letter from James Mill to Alexander Walker, 6 November 1819, NLS MSS 13724, ff. 177-178v; f.177. See also the Appendix in this thesis.

⁸⁷ Walker sent more than 269 folios of despatches to Mill containing his opinion of Indian society and his reflections on Mill's *History*. They are now kept in the National Library of Scotland, NLS MSS 13737. I find that Walker's long letter to Mill on 8 April 1820 contained some of Walker's main arguments in the voluminous despatches, which gave more detailed evidence and argumentation than this letter. I have transcribed the letter in the Appendix to this study.

⁸⁸ Letter from Alexander Walker to James Mill, 21 Nov. 1819. NLS MSS 13724, ff. 189-192; f. 190v.

I fully agree with you that we have no standard of civilisation, & of course no precise & accurate ideas, or language in which to convey them. Amid the difficulties with which I had to struggle, & which nobody seems to have appreciated more greatly than yourself ... it is not impossible that I may have leant too strongly to the other side, though I shall think that you & I do not really differ much, if we had only a precise language, by which we could communicate our real ideas to one another. I draw this conclusion, because there are so few of your observations in addition to which I do not assent, though they are adduced by you to show that my estimate of the civilisation of the people in question is too low. I draw the same conclusion from what occurs to me with Mr Strachey, who like you accuses me of rating the Hindus below the proper mark. And yet the other day, when I asked him, do you not allow that our British ancestors were in a state as far advanced in point of civilisation in the days of Henry the 4th as the Hindus were when the Moghuls conquered them? He answered instantly that he thought our ancestors were the more advanced. I answered, you then go as far as I do. The whole of that long and minute induction which I laboriously performed in my 1st book appears to me to lead merely to that conclusion.⁸⁹

Neither Strachey nor Walker, however, understood why Mill chose Henry IV's England as the standard for comparison. Walker argued that, in that century, Europe was too backward to be comparable with India.

The vague ideas we have of civilization must render every attempt peculiarly difficult, if not impossible, to fix the precise rank of the Hindus in the scale. In my opinion they are far above the days of Henry the 4th. They lived in a faithless period which was distinguished by crimes and Civil wars. Property was extremely insecure and the Laws but little respected. If the state of civilization depends on commerce it had made little progress in that reign, when bills of exchange were unknown and a communication had scarcely begun to be established between the Southern and the Northern parts of Europe, It was extremely rare even in the 15th Century for an English vessel to appear in the Mediterranean. In the 14th Century we are informed that the manners even of the Italians were rude. The cloaths of the men were of leather unlined and badly tanned...⁹⁰

Walker's specific comparison missed Mill's sociological point. But the point Walker recognised that commerce was absent in fourteenth-century England was essential for Mill's comparison. Mill chose Henry IV's reign as an equivalence for Indian society because he tended to compare Indian society with a medieval society: the civilisation of

⁸⁹ Letter from James Mill to Walker, 6 Nov. 1819, NLS MSS 13724, f. 178. See the Appendix in this thesis.

⁹⁰ Letter from Walker to James Mill, 21 Nov. 1819, NLS MSS 13724, f. 191. See the Appendix in this thesis.

the society had advanced to some degree, but was not a commercial, namely, modern society. The Scottish philosophical historians generally agreed that the accession of Henry VII was the beginning of the end of English feudalism. Hume argued that, during the early Tudor period, 'the minds of men, through Europe, especially in England, seem to have undergone a general, but insensible revolution'.⁹¹ Millar was identical with Hume at identifying Tudor monarchy as the beginning of the modern English society when he claimed that Henry VII's reign witnessed a profound change in society with the end of feudalism.⁹² Millar maintained that 'the improvement in agriculture and in trade and manufactures, which appeared so conspicuously from the accession of the Tudor family, contributed, more than any other circumstance, to increase the influence and authority of the crown'.⁹³ Comparing Indian society with Henry IV's reign, Mill had a clear idea of the emergence and elements of modern society in mind, and did not admit any attribute or element of modern society to India. While Millar had a general idea of the universal features of feudal society, Mill tended to draw on the idea of feudalism for his comparative study of western and eastern societies. Millar suggested that, although feudalism was a unique phenomenon in European history, similar elements of the socio-political structure were found in many other societies. Millar identified feudal society with the agricultural age. In agricultural society, the chiefs or barons were independent of one another. They owned great properties with subordinate

⁹¹ Quoted from Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*, ii, 203.

⁹² For Hume's interpretation of the decline of feudalism and of Henry VII as an unintentional despot, see N. T. Phillipson, *Hume*, pp. 82, 110-1, 129; Pocock, *ibid.*, pp. 202ff; and O'Brien, *Narratives of Enlightenment*, pp. 84ff.

⁹³ John Millar, *An Historical View of the English Government* (London, 1787), p. 503. Millar later criticised Hume and maintained that 'Upon the whole, it is gross error to suppose, that the English government was rendered absolute in the reign of Henry the Seventh'. *Ibid.*, p. 524.

vassals or military tenants, as did the same chiefs or nobles upon the coast of Africa, and in several parts of the East Indies. Millar observed that in the East Indies, society operated on a feudal system.⁹⁴ Although Mill described Indian society as a feudal society, he believed that the feudal society of India was individual. He agreed that Indian chieftains formed a feudal connection, but their military operation was not European-style feudalism. He suggested that Indian princes were despotic. They summoned soldiers, who dispersed all over the country during peacetime, to the courts under their command in time of war. 'From this circumstance it has been rashly concluded, that feudal conditions of military service, in fact a feudal government, nearly resembling that which existed in Europe, had place in Hindustan'.⁹⁵ Nor was the Indian constitution based on feudal principles. India was a system of tribal governments.

The tendency which universally displays itself among the Hindus, as among other half-civilized nations, to form themselves into small divisions, and even, when forced by circumstances to assume for a time the form of a great nation, presently to dissolve into trifling communities, under the government of separate chiefs, speedily produced its usual effects among the people whose circumstances we are now contemplating.⁹⁶

It is reasonable to infer that Mill's believed that Indian society was a feudal society, but has not yet reached to the most delicate form of feudalism. Mill started the puzzling historiographical problem - the comparative studies of feudalism among different societies.

Not only obsessed with certainty and clearness of ideas, but also with the positivist theory of history, Mill regretted the failure of modern philosophers to develop the stadial

⁹⁴ Millar, *Observations Concerning the Distinction of Ranks*, pp. 188-9, 223.

⁹⁵ Mill, *History*, i, 147.

⁹⁶ *Edinburgh Review* (July 1813), p. 440.

theory of history.

... philosophers have not as yet laid down any very distinct canons for ascertaining the principal stages of civilization. The ideas of the greatest part of mankind on the subject, are therefore vague in the extreme. All they do is, to fix on one or two of the principal nations of Europe as at the highest point of civilization; and wherever, in any country, a few of the first appearances strike them as bearing a resemblance to some of the most obvious appearances in these standards of comparison, such countries are at once held to be civilized.⁹⁷

Nevertheless, Mill himself did not succeed in establishing clear and distinct ideas of criteria for measuring the advancement of civilisation. Instead, he aimed at providing a comparative method on the wholesale scale of Asian societies, with which to judge Asian societies relative to each other. As will be seen, Mill tried to employ Jeffrey's notion of semi-barbarism when comparing the principal nations of Asia.

Mill's second historical method leaned heavily on the theory of human nature. Closely following Stewart's misleading interpretation of Smith's historical jurisprudence and the theory of language, Mill suggested that in the absence of evidence, the historian had to rely on the laws of human nature. Some writers had suggested that battles and conquests in ancient India were conducted 'with moderate methods' and they did not seize or occupy the countries conquered. Mill rejected this claim and said that even nations as civilised as the Romans did not do so.⁹⁸ Mill argued that, in the absence of verified historical documents, the only means for inferring the manners and institutions of the Hindus was 'our experience of human nature'. Mill opposed the argument that the Hindus were highly civilised because they had a extensive empire, by arguing that China and Persia had long created extensive empires although they had only advanced a few

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, (July 1809), p. 413.

⁹⁸ Mill, *History*, ii, 140.

steps in civilisation.⁹⁹ From being sceptical about evidence to relying on the ‘laws of human nature’, Mill’s historiography represented the Scottish Enlightenment at its most rationalist, while his view of Empire represented the influence of his London experience. Mill was ready to be an assimilationist and to embrace the profound culture of London. He wrote to his friends that London was the best place for learning and culture.¹⁰⁰ Whereas Robertson wrote of the backwardness of pre-Union Scotland, Mill appreciated the developed state of London. In this light, can it be a surprise that Mill detested Hindu society? Forbes described Ferguson as a peculiar example of Enlightenment culture because the latter’s confidence in commercial or modern society was comparatively lacking. This was due to Ferguson’s Highland background.¹⁰¹ But Mill had no sympathy with the Ossianic society. He could not understand Burke’s sorrow for the loss of the Middle Ages, as he could not believe that there was anything so beautiful worthy of preservation in Gothic society.

Mill’s idea of progress was not the sole impetus behind his distrust of ancient documents. A more important factor was Mill’s interest in history as studied by the social historians of the Scottish Enlightenment. For Mill, historical truth was not only represented in written documents but also in the social institutions, manners, government and the general picture of society as a whole. The following is a most telling example of this view:

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 124ff.

¹⁰⁰ Right after his move to London, Mill felt a sense of freedom in the cosmopolitan city. He wrote to a friend in Edinburgh that ‘I am extremely ambitious to remain here, which I feel to be so much the best scene for a man of letters. ... You get an ardour and a spirit of adventurousness, which you never can get an idea of among our over-cautious countrymen at home’. Bain, *James Mill*, p. 37.

¹⁰¹ Duncan Forbes, ‘Introduction’ to Adam Ferguson, *Essay on the History of the Civil Society*.

With regard to the ancient history of India, we are still not without resources. The meritorious researches of the modern Europeans, who have explored the institutions, the laws, the manners, the arts, occupations and maxims of this ancient people, have enabled philosophy to draw the picture of society, which they have presented, through a long revolution of years. We cannot describe the lives of their kings, or the circumstances and results of a train of battles. But we can show how they lived together as members of the community, and of families; how they were arranged in society; what arts they practised, what tenets they believed, what manners they displayed; under what species of government they existed; and what character, as human beings, they possessed. This is by far the most useful and important part of history.¹⁰²

Third, Mill believed that history was most concerned with facts. The judge-like task of an historian in assessing evidence was, indeed, a process of selecting facts about events. When all the important facts were available, philosophers were called to make a final evaluation of the quality or nature of the society in question. Finding facts was the primary task of philosophical history; and the primary goal was to pass judgements on societies and their histories. Being optimistic about the distinction between facts and forgeries, truth and myth, Mill compared himself with great pride to Napier stating that he had composed a history of India that would be consulted in the future by all historians of this subject.

Of India I have undertaken to give no less than a complete history, in which I aim at comprising all the information in which Europeans are very materially interested; and, thank God, after having had it nearly ten years upon the carpet, I am now revising it for the press, and hope to begin to print as soon as I return to London. It will make three 4to volumes, which, whatever else they may contain, will contain the fruits of a quantity of labour, of which nobody who shall not go over the same ground, and go over it without the assistance of my book, can form an adequate conception.¹⁰³ [emphasis added]

This statement seems to anticipate some later historians' noble dream of giving a total history. Nevertheless, Mill did not actually publish his *History* that year, because he found some other even more important 'evidences' provided by Mark Wilks. Wilks

¹⁰² Mill, *History*, i, 119.

¹⁰³ *Selection from the Correspondence of the late Macvey Napier*, p.18. Mill to Napier, 23 Oct. 1816.

published the second and third volumes of his *Historical Sketches of the South of India* in 1817, which caused Mill to postpone his own publication. Mill expressed to Ricardo that Wilks' publication 'laid me under the necessity of a very careful confrontation of his narrative with my MS, he having enjoyed, from being governor in the country, peculiar opportunities of knowledge; and what he added to my knowledge required a certain portion of my narrative to be written afresh, while I had the printers at my heels.'¹⁰⁴ Thus, Mill spent two more years on re-writing his manuscripts to integrate Wilks's reports and opinion of Indian societies. The number of years that he had invested in writing the *History* was determined, as a matter of fact, by his positivist historiography. How could Mill be so sure that there would be no other Wilkses providing even more important narratives of India that would compel him to write the *History* afresh yet again? Mill warned his readers that the things to be observed in India were infinite in number; likewise, the number of historical facts to be provided had also to be infinite. The claim to provide a 'complete' history certainly seems to have been over optimistic. Nevertheless, Mill undoubtedly thought that facts *per se* were not the sole concern of historians. Equally important was an historian's decision about which facts were important and significant for the purpose of writing history and which were not.

Mill has often been criticised for his assertion that he could be entirely qualified as an historian of India without any personal experience of that country. Mill did not belittle the utility of personal experience in understanding a society as much as his assertion might imply and as some modern critics have assumed. In an interesting letter to Francis

¹⁰⁴ *The Works and Correspondence of David Ricardo*, vii. 195. Mill to Ricardo, 19 Oct. 1817, See also his letter to Ricardo on 24 Aug. 1817, *ibid.*, 183.

Place, Mill advised the young Thomas Hodgkin how to observe German society, particularly in Hanover, during his intended journey to the Continent. Mill suggested to Hodgkin that he study seven major features: (1) the political power of the king, the nobles and the clergy; (2) the indirect power of the king, i.e. influence; (3) the system of taxation; (4) the administration of justice; (5) the distribution of landed property; (6) religion, with questions such as ‘what are rules of the priests?’, ‘what toleration is there by law or in practice?’; and (7) education. Mill further suggested a method of social investigation very similar to the ‘participant-observer’ model made famous by Malinowski: living with the people from whom information of that society was being collected. Mill further advised Hodgkin that, in order to obtain knowledge ‘of the state of the cultivators’:

I would go & board myself in the house of a farmer, live in the family, see every thing, & seek explanation of every thing, & remain there till I had the information I was in quest of. Next I would try to board myself in the house of a school master, till I has learn[e]d all that I could from him. Next I would board myself in the house of some parish priest, who was poor enough to board me for such a sum as I could afford. And there I could hear all that was to be learn[e]d about the clergy & religion. As to the University, if not able to board myself with a professor, I would go to the boarding or lodging houses of the poorer students, & by conversation with them, acquire the knowledge of which I was in request. In this manner, I should get the greater part of the knowledge I wanted independently of introduction to men of consequence. ... Another recommendation to Mr Hodgkin should be, to write down every day what occurs every day, & to trust nothing to memory. What is written fresh at the moment, has a zest, which is after lost in one day.¹⁰⁵

Mill’s description of such imaginary social investigations from the first person point of view suggests that he viewed himself as a role-model. In fact, this letter was part of his project for creating a system of Benthamite education. Several copies of this letter were made available to different people, just like a school text in Benthamite Utilitarianism

¹⁰⁵ Letter from James Mill to Francis Place, 17 May 1817, BL Add. MSS 35153, ff. 2-5.

assigned by the schoolmaster. In the Preface to his *History*, Mill defended his not having been in India by claiming that it was due to certain circumstances, and not that it was his chosen methodology for observing a society. Mill's distrust of memory matched his distrust of imagination. Mill's style of social investigation was very different from the styles and attitudes of those who undertook the Grand Tour. People on the Grand Tour were from the upper classes, and the society on the Continent with which they intended to acquaint themselves with was elite or aristocratic. By contrast, Mill encouraged young Hodgkin to board with a farmer's family or at some general students' lodgings. Because of their social background, both Mill and Hodgkin were more interested in the middling ranks of society. The attention paid to the middling and lower ranks of society indicated a new era of intellectual interest in social observation, which was in accord with one important aspect of the sociological thought of Millar and others of the Scottish Enlightenment. This aspect of the sociological study of society was certainly absent in Bentham's own works.

vii. The theory of semi-barbarism and Millian Orientalism

As has been shown, with his view of legal evolution, Jeffrey had already hinted at a tri-stadial theory. Like Alexander's ranking of civilisations with respect to the condition of women, Jeffrey's stadial theory was meant to facilitate the comparison of European and non-European societies. In the early nineteenth century, as Mill pointed out, theoreticians treated Europe as the highest example of civilisation while non-European societies were judged in comparison to it. In doing so, the Jeffreyean or Alexanderian stadial theories were not concerned with the state of nature or the original conditions of human society,

but, rather, with the differences in civilisation between European and non-European societies. Actually, these theories were formulated to describe the differences between European, Asian and African and American societies. It was James Mill, however, obsessed as he was with the importance of clear and distinct ideas, who attempted to concretise the stadial theory by employing Jeffreyean language. Mill painstakingly tried to give his assumption about India's semi-barbarism a clear-cut theoretical basis through his philosophical view of human society and his comparative studies of other 'semi-barbarous' societies. One of the most relevant implications here is that this theory of semi-barbarous society exerted a great influence on the propagation of Mill's Orientalism. By Orientalism, I mean that Mill did not distinguish 'Asian' nations from one another. Instead, Mill considered all Asian nations as belonging to a similar state of civilisation - similar in the sense that they all belonged to the very same stage of development, the 'semi-civilised' stage. Since Jeffrey used the term 'semi-barbarous' to describe Chinese civilisation, many *Edinburgh* reviewers extended the use of this term to describe all Asian societies. For instance, John Crawford described those merchants who did business with Celebes (now Sulawesi), China and New Holland, as 'semibarbarous traders'. Likewise, Malcolm described the Rajput tribes of India as 'half-civilized'.¹⁰⁶ Mill followed suit, frequently using phrases like 'semicivilised government', 'half-civilised nations', 'semi-barbarians', and 'semi-barbarous age' to describe various societies in Asia.¹⁰⁷ What is crucial here, however, is not Mill's imitation of Jeffreyean

¹⁰⁶ *Edinburgh Review* (Nov. 1817), p. 40. John Malcolm, *The Political History of India* (London, 1826), ii. 168.

¹⁰⁷ *Edinburgh Review* (April 1810), p. 148; *ibid.*, (July 1813), p. 440; *The British Review*, 11 (1818), 141; *Monthly Review*, 70 (Jan. 1813), 23 respectively. For even more examples, see Mill, *History*, ii. 1ff, 114, 115, and *passim*.

language. More stress should be placed, for one thing, on how Mill utilised the language of the 'stadial' progress of society to set up a framework for his *History of British India*, and, more importantly, on how he used the concept to challenge Jones' and Robertson's legacy.

Mill argued that the Indian collective mind was much less advanced than Jones and many other Orientalists supposed. As has been discussed before, Mill's argument was exaggerated and polemical. On the other hand, Mill took a sociological approach to explaining why Indian society was in the middle state of actual achievement of civilisation. Mill applied the Smithian idea of the division of labour to his analysis of Indian society. Mill argued that the advancement of civilisation meant no more than the means and capacity a society had of fulfilling its needs. Both the division of labour and occupational multiplication proliferated along with the progress of society.

[The caste system's] distribution of the whole people into four classes only, and the appropriation of them to four species of employment; an arrangement which, in the very simple state of society in which it must have been introduced, was a great step in improvement, must have been productive of innumerable inconveniences, as the wants of society multiplied.¹⁰⁸

Mill implied that, when 'the wants of society multiplied', society could and should then fulfil its needs by augmenting the various forms of labour and increasing the number of occupations.

The idea of civilisation with regard to the division of labour was evident in Mill's defence of commerce. In a pamphlet attacking Spence and Cobbett, Mill disputed Spence's argument about luxury. Spence asserted that most commodities in European markets were luxuries. And 'the increase of *luxury* is absolutely essential' to the well

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, i, 138.

being of 'the manufacturing and unproductive classes'.¹⁰⁹ The idea of luxury was problematic for Scottish Enlightenment theorists, and not every theorist found a way to reconcile the idea of luxury and corruption of personality. For instance, to balance virtue and commerce, Kames could only say that, 'as far as people can afford and the commodities can encourage arts, manufactures and commerce, luxury does not exist'. Kames's argument was rather elusive, or implicit. Mill argued explicitly that the non-existence of luxury was possible in his political economy. He argued that 'consumption' had two meanings: one, as 'consumption of extinction' which actually annihilated property, such as consuming corn; and, the other, as 'consumption of renovation' which in fact increased property. In other places Mill described this second type as consumption 'in the way of reproduction'. The consumption of annihilation was by and large necessary for sustaining lives, while the consumption of reproduction encouraged industry. Therefore, 'there is no fear man has to feel about luxury'.¹¹⁰ Mill also divided commodities into two kinds of object. On the one hand, there were evanescent commodities 'destined to serve for immediate and unproductive consumption'. On the other hand, there were durable commodities 'destined to operate as the instruments or means of production'.¹¹¹ Mill's defence of commerce was an early expression of the theory of pull drive. More importantly, he looked at the economy only in relation to its utility, regardless of its moral consequences. In such an a-moral argument, he explained away the problem of luxury. Mill's explanation encouraged and fostered an optimistic

¹⁰⁹ James Mill, *Commerce Defended* (London, 1807), p. 66. Modern scholars seem ~~uncertain~~ who were the Mr Spence and Mr Cobbett involved in this controversy. Neither can I decide whether Spence was Thomas Spence, and Cobbett William Cobbett.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 69, 79, 86-7.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 47-8.

view of society and a forward-looking one of progress. And it was from this particular perspective that Indian society entered Mill's field of vision.

As a result, Mill failed to study Indian society on its own terms. He cared little about how the Indian elite had imposed culturally-specific values on their own people, which put their society on a different track from that of western commercial societies.¹¹² Mill committed himself to scrutinising only the universal aspects of social structures, such as the power relationships and utility of institutions. In Mill's view, Hindu laws espoused greater inequality among classes and between gender than any other 'civilised' society.

The distance between the different orders of men is immense and degrading. ... all crimes are more severely punished in the subordinate classes; the penalty [sic] ascending, by gradation, from the gentle correction of the venerable Brahmen to the harsh and sanguinary chastisement of the degraded Sudra.¹¹³

Mill also quoted from *The Institutions of Menu*,

Menu, son of the Self-existent, has named ten places of punishment, which are appropriated to the three lower classes; the part of generation, the belly, the tongue, the two hands; and fifthly, the two feet, the eye, the nose, both ears, the property; and in the capital case, the whole body; but a Brahmen must depart from the realm unhurt in any one of them.¹¹⁴

Horace Wilson, the great commentator on the 1858 edition of Mill's *History*, argued that Hindu laws did not 'really' punish Brahmins less severely than Sudras. 'The banishment of a Brahman, however, is a very severe punishment, as it involves loss of caste, and consequent degradation.'¹¹⁵ Alexander Walker also defended Hindu laws by saying that,

¹¹² To use Talcott Parsons's words, Indian society had an uncompromisingly different 'matrix of centralised values' from western Europe.

¹¹³ Mill, *History*, i, 134.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 182.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 182n.

though Brahmans were exempted from the death penalty, they were subjected to peculiar punishments such that he has 'his lock shorn, his face blackened and exposed on an ass is disgracefully expelled'.¹¹⁶ Both Wilson's and Walker's defence of Hindu laws was based on the value-systems of Hindu society, as the loss of caste for a Brahman was actually considered no less a great humiliation and punishment than death for a Sudra. From Mill's viewpoint of utility, Wilson or Walker's defence missed the point: namely, the formal equality of the law. It is probably true that a Brahmin would feel more humiliated to be flogged in public and that he would prefer to be punished by death as Walker and Wilson claimed. Walker forgot the fact, however, that the Brahmans' sense of self-respect was the result of their prestigious social position. Hindu laws showed that the legal system was inevitably interwoven with culture and customs. Mill believed, nevertheless, that there were ways to change these unfair customs and prejudices and to create a rational system of laws, which would secure complete equality. Consequently, Mill had to argue without referring to customs or culture-specific features of laws. He drew readers' attention to his theory of the progress of legislation. Mill thought that, whereas laws were initially made to punish, they should be made to 'settle disputes' when the society became more advanced.¹¹⁷ As in China, where the authorities governed the country by bamboo and flogging, in India, punishment 'governs all mankind'.¹¹⁸ Mill, at this point, appealed to Montesquieu's authority: fear was the principal weapon used by Oriental governments. The problem, however, is that Montesquieu never did

¹¹⁶ NLS MSS 13737, f. 38 v.

¹¹⁷ Mill, *History*, i, 148. Mill's opinion on this point was dissimilar to Kames's. Kames said that the penal laws became more and more severe with the progress of society. However, when society progressed to a commercial society, the laws became extremely mild as in China. Kames, *History of Man*, ii, 225-6.

¹¹⁸ *The Eclectic Review*, 6 (1810), 1027. Mill, *History*, i, 149, 176.

rank the achievement of civilisation in Asia and western Europe by their governments' ruling methods. Montesquieu wanted to prove that a government created its own mores among its subjects. Mill's comparative view of politics, on the other hand, suggested that man could always find some forms of government and legislation that were better than others. Mill's critiques of Hindu society were based on his belief of the importance of jurisprudence and justice in civil society. Like Montesquieu, Mill believed that Indians replaced laws with sacred texts, and Brahmans were the actual interpreters of laws. Consequently, it was 'doctrines of ceremonies of religion; the rules and practice of education; the institutions; the duties, and customs of domestic life; the maxims of private morality', among many other, but not jurisprudence and judicature, that were essentially important for the Hindus.¹¹⁹ Without the safeguard of the judicial system and hereditary or property rights protected by laws, Indian society did not develop as a commercial society because its laws were not suitable for one.¹²⁰

In addition, Indian paternal power and men's dominating authority in households and society were attributes of a semi-barbarous society. Mill observed that in India, women's social conditions were probably worse than in many other Asian nations. The *Institutes of Menu* prescribed that 'a woman must never seek independence'.¹²¹ They had to depend on their father in childhood, on their husbands in adulthood, and on their sons thereafter. As a political reformer, Mill thought Indian society un-civilised because the way women were treated by their husbands was 'not regarded as very different from

¹¹⁹ Mill, *ibid.*, 154-5.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 154-163. For example, Mill remarked that '[t]he right, however, conveyed by a bonâ fide purchase, is not among the Hindus, carried to that extent, which is found requisite in a commercial and highly civilised society.' *Ibid.*, p. 160.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 311.

slavery'. Mill might have been aware that in everyday practice and conventional customs the actual restraints on women in India might be much less rigid and inhumane than it appeared to be in written prescriptions.¹²² Mill had his own reason, however, for making such a severe criticism and this was because he always perceived societies' reforms in institutional, written and formal forms. He believed that institutions and written documents or laws embodied the collective rationality of the society. 'There is no part of the rules of procedure which more strongly indicate the maturity or immaturity of the human mind, than the rules of [giving] evidence' in courts.¹²³ In terms of women's social conditions, Indian society had made improvements from a savage society, but it still could not be described as civilised. Mill allowed that the Indians had 'some precepts, recommending indulgence and humanity in favour of the weaker sex', but Indian society as a whole was far from being civilised.¹²⁴ Mill supported this criticism with two arguments. First, from the viewpoint of individuals' rights, Indian women were not protected by laws and customs: 'women have no choice in their own destiny'.¹²⁵ Second, and more important, he argued that from Indian women's seclusion from society, it could be proved that this society was at the stage of semi-barbarism. Following the stadial history of the Scottish Enlightenment, Mill viewed Asian social manners from the economic point of view.

The law of seclusion is made only for the few. Among the jealous Ottomans themselves,

¹²² Walker warned Mill that *suttee* or *sati* was only popular among the rich families not because of the law or sanctions, but because it became a fashion and was admired by such families. And in reality 'I imagine there is no instance for many ages of a Hindu Gov^t. having sanctioned and permitted, or even having connived at this sacrifice'. NLS MSS 13737, ff. 86, 89v. Likewise, Horace Wilson pointed out that Mill relied too much on *Menu* to understand Hindu society. Mill, *History*, ii, 52n.

¹²³ Mill, *History*, ii, 362.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, i, 316.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, i, 317

the great body of the community must leave their women at large, because an indigent man can neither dispense with the useful services of his wife, nor afford the cost of retaining her in confinement. In the earlier and ruder states of society, when men are in general poor, few can afford the expense of confinement; but among the Hindus, as in general among the nations of Asia, since their emerging from the rudest barbarism, it seems to have been the practice for every man, who possessed sufficient means, to keep his women guarded, in a state of seclusion.¹²⁶

In terms of jurisprudence or women's rights, Asian society was un-civilised, although its economy could not allow many to practise uncivilised customs. Mill consciously transposed Montesquieu's ideas of oriental society into the framework of stadial history of semi-barbarism.

The other method that Mill employed to define the semi-barbarism of Indian society was to compare Indian society with other Asian societies, and the inspiration of this method was derived from Robertson's *History of America*. At a time when anthropological perspectives on the relativism of cultures were not yet fashionable, Mill's method could not be seen as a vain attempt. Like Robertson, who had previously tried to level Mexican tribes with other Amerindian tribes, despite the former's high skills in arts and its extensive empire, Mill tried to relate Indian civilisation to Amins, Chinese, Turks, Indo-Chinese and many other Asian nations. In Mill's treatment, Indian society was semi-barbarous just as were other Asian societies. Mill suggested that all the principal nations of Asia resembled each other. 'No one can take an accurate survey of the different nations of Asia, and of their different ages, without remarking the near approaches they make to the same stage of civilisation.'¹²⁷ Mill even went so far as to compare Mexican society with Indian society. Many critics regarded arts and languages as two key achievements of Indian civilisation. But Mill did not think these suitable to

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 318.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, ii, 150.

serve as criteria for judging achievement of civilisation. Mill suggested that the Mexicans ‘accomplished works, which in magnitude and symmetry, vie with any thing of which Hindustan has to boast’, and the Mexicans ‘did not know about iron ... were unacquainted with the use of scaffolds and cranes ... [and] had not beasts of burden.’¹²⁸ Mexicans’ technological conditions indicated that the society was not in a state of high civilisation. Their works of art, however, were able to ‘vie with’ those of India. Mill drew attention to Molina’s appreciation of the beauty of Chilian, Marsden Malayan, Clavigero Mexican and many others.¹²⁹ This appreciation was much the same as that which antiquarians exhibited when they admired the Anglo-Saxon language.¹³⁰ Robertson, in the *History of America*, equated Mexican society with the level reached by other tribes of Amerindians. Although Robertson recognised all the arts, philosophy and political institutions that the Mexican empire had achieved, he still described it as belonging to savage society or as ‘imperfectly polished’.¹³¹ Likewise, though Mill agreed that ‘The Hindus had made considerable progress beyond the first and lowest stage of human society’, he still regarded them as being in the state of civilisation that could be termed semibarbarism.¹³²

It has been overlooked by many modern critics that Mill discussed Chinese civilisation in detail in *The History of British India*. Ricardo recognised Mill’s comparative method, which included a wide range of Asian nations in his works.¹³³ The

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 64-5.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 65.

¹³¹ Robertson, *History of America*, ii, 253.

¹³² Mill, *History*, i, 231.

¹³³ Although Ricardo was not familiar with the works of the Scottish Enlightenment or with philosophical history, his observations on Mill’s *History* were perceptive. He told Malthus . Letter of Ricardo to

reason for Mill to bring China into his discussions of India was that the image of China's high civilisation had really been transformed and challenged in the late eighteenth century. Mill's comparative approach was but to give the *coup de grace* to the image of the high Chinese civilisation, and, more importantly, to encourage him to generalise the theory of the state of semi-barbarism to which all of Asian nations belonged.¹³⁴

A fondness for those surprising feats of bodily agility and dexterity which form the arts of the tumbler and the juggler, is a feature in the character of the Hindu. It is a passive enjoyment which corresponds with the passiveness of his temper; and it seems in general to be adapted to the taste of all men in a similar state of society.¹³⁵

In a way, this statement is Mill's holistic view of civilisation: every aspect or performance of cultural activity was symptomatic of civilisation as a whole. Many Scots of the Enlightenment allowed a certain degree of flexibility in their theories - manners and institutions were not absolutely determined nor could they be determined by the mode of subsistence or the state of civilisation. As a man who felt tremendously uneasy with 'vagueness and darkness, incoherence, inconsistency, and confusion',¹³⁶ Mill explicitly exposed his attitude towards such a holistic and comparative view of civilisation.

It is from a joint view of all the great circumstances taken together, that their progress can be ascertained; and it is from an accurate comparison, grounded on these general

Malthus, in a letter of 16 Dec. 1817, that 'it [the *History*] not only descants on the religion, manners, laws, arts, and literature, of the Hindus, but compares them with the religion manners &c. of other nations ... and if these in the Hindus are to be deemed marks of a high state of civilization, Africa, Mexico, Peru, Persia, and China, might also lay claim to the same character. ... The Political Economy is I think excellent, and the part that I have read may be considered as the author's view of the progress of the human mind'. *Works and Correspondence of David Ricardo*, vii. 223.

¹³⁴ In his *Ungoverned Imagining*, Majeed judiciously describes Mill's method as 'comparisonism'. Unfortunately, Majeed still fails to acknowledge the fact that Asian nations beyond Indian subcontinent played also an important role in Mill's comparative method.

¹³⁵ Mill, *History*, i, 335.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 232.

views, that a scale of civilisation can be formed, on which the relative positions of nations may be accurately marked.¹³⁷

With this holistic view of society and civilisation, Mill made a peculiar attempt to view everything Indian and Chinese through his theory of civilisation of semi-barbarism. 'Both nations [the Chinese and the Hindus] are to nearly an equal degree tainted with the vices of insincerity ... Both are disposed to excessive exaggeration with regard to anything relating to themselves. Both are cowardly and unfeeling ... full of affected contempt for others.'¹³⁸ Moreover, Mill brought other 'minor' Asian nations into comparison with Indian and Chinese societies in order to discredit the higher status of Indian and Chinese civilisations. Mill remarked that the inhabitants of the great peninsula of Asia discovered 'the uniform marks of a similar state of society'. Moreover, the Cochin-Chinese who were 'merely a separate community of the Chinese race, appear by no means in civilisation behind the Chinese and Hindu'. And in the kingdom of Assam the 'silks are excellent, and resemble those of China'.¹³⁹ China was important for Mill's argument because China, along with India, had been regarded as the best example of high civilisation in Asia. Mill linked Voltaire, the great exponent of *chinoiserie*, with Jones, the emblem of British Indophilia. Although Voltaire was 'a keen-eyed and sceptical judge' and Jones 'a mind so pure, so warm in the pursuit of truth, and so devoted to oriental learning', they both failed to grasp the idea of civilisation. 'The term civilisation was by him [Jones], as by most men, attached to no fixed and definite assemblage of ideas ... it was applied to nations in all the stages of social

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, ii, 110.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 155.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 157, 159.

advancement'.¹⁴⁰ Voltaire and Jones created a legacy of Sinophilia and Indophilia respectively. Many Scots of the Enlightenment, such as Lord Kames and John Millar, worked on theorising stadial progress on the basis of these two great men's presuppositions. But they found it difficult to reconcile the problems of social institutions such as female slavery, infanticide, suttee and polygamy and to fit them into a general picture of the advancement of civilisation. Perhaps the difference between Mill's view of Asian history and previous accounts can best be described in terms of Thomas Kuhn's notion of a 'paradigm shift'. He hoped that in the theory of semi-barbarism he would find no more inconsistencies. He explained away the arts and languages as evidence of high culture in Indian and Chinese civilisations. Moreover, he compared the technologies of minor Asian nations to balance the notion of the high achievement of Chinese and Indian in practical sciences.

Mill certainly found that the idea of semi-barbarism was, for the moment, a useful term with which to describe the difference in civilisation between the nations of Europe, Africa and Asia. Walker might be right to say that Indian society was more civilised than England in the age of Henry IV. But was it, in Walker's mind, more 'civilised' than the late Tudor society? Is there any historical significance for a comparative study to argue that Indian society in the early nineteenth century was more civilised than that of the early Tudors', but less civilised than that of late Tudors' England? Walker's contention would have more historical significance, had he put his arguments on the framework of the Scottish historiography: discussing changes from medieval to modern societies. Robertson was certainly more self-conscious about his treatment of Mexican and

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 108, 109.

Peruvian societies as equal to other Amerindian tribes in terms of the state of their civilisation. He, thus, tried to compose a separate history for the empires. Mill was more arrogant and confident about his judgement. But the point is that both Robertson and Mill were writing philosophical history, in which human society was viewed from a paramount, thus, very abstract perspective. They were not interested in the details or the nuances of societies, but in the stages of civilisation. And the stages were not divided into hundreds or more, but only three or four. From many other viewpoints, such a philosophical history was too abstract. Nevertheless, it was this genre of history that gave Mill his rationale for arguing against Britain's existing policies of legal reform in India.¹⁴¹

viii. Moral philosophy and imperialist sentiment

Mill emphasised the virtue of benevolence. Mill believed that being benevolent towards one's fellow-creatures was an important virtue. He proposed gravely that the British should engage more in the international affairs, and be concerned with other nations, not only in Asia, but also in America and Africa. As has been illustrated above, many *Edinburgh* reviewers propagated a conservative policy towards the ruling class of India. Mill's own *History* received friendly but lukewarm praise from that journal. The reviewer expressed that 'We feel little sympathy for those among whom we have not lived in our childhood, and among whom we do not expect to pass our old age'.¹⁴² On

¹⁴¹ At this point, Mehta borrows Walter Benjamin's words to describe James Mill: 'a thought must be crude to come into its own in action.' Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago, 1999), p. 91.

¹⁴² *Edinburgh Review*, (Dec. 1818), p. 10.

the other hand, Mill's radical attitude towards the world brought with it a theory of the active ethics of benevolence.

As a consistent and sturdy advocate of British imperialistic and philanthropic causes, Mill tried to promote British responsibilities in India throughout his literary career, even by drawing the public's attention to Spanish America. Mill described Napoleon's civilising mission within and beyond Europe as 'the benevolent plans of the French emperor for the improvement and happiness of the human race'.¹⁴³ Perhaps Mill's admiration of Napoleon could not be unflinching, but sarcastic. To be sure, for Mill, there was no distinction between philanthropic and imperialist purposes when bringing European institutions or ideas to other peoples. Philanthropic and imperialist sentiments could undoubtedly co-exist when they were both embodied in a beneficially centralised and powerful government over the colonies. In praising Raffles's iron policy of prohibiting the slave trade and subverting Muslim rulers, Mill exclaimed that Raffles had left behind him an example of 'a benevolent and enlightened administration as was never before exhibited in that region of European or Asiatic despotism'. Bastin describes Raffles as a 'virtual Napoleonic philosopher'. If that assessment is just, it is not surprising then that Mill would be ready to endorse this new governor of Java.¹⁴⁴ Besides, Mill reported that, upon seeing the British introduction of commerce and government into the region, the Javanese 'know that the British government put an end to the cruel rapaciousness of public servants, and broke the yoke of their tyrannical

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, (July 1812), p. 52

¹⁴⁴ Quoted from C. A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, p. 211. See also J. Bastin, *The Native Policies of Sir Stamford Raffles in Java and Sumatra* (Oxford, 1957), p. xx.

chiefs'.¹⁴⁵ Mill's theory of civilisation, like that of the Scots of the Enlightenment, was supposed to be universal. Thus, his sentiment towards society was not barred by cultural boundaries. Mill ridiculed British indifference to other countries in the following way.

We take little interest in the pleasures or pains of such a people [the Persians]; since they seem to be a species of creatures for whom it is not worth our while to feel, because they are incapable of feeling for themselves, or at least of acting as their feelings ought to direct.¹⁴⁶

Likewise, in reviewing *Hindu Infanticide* by Edward Moor, Mill stood against moderate clergymen such as Sydney Smith and the conservative view of supporting a policy of non-interference in British India.

[From] year to year, almost from age to age, [the Englishmen] stand the cold spectators of the unparalleled misery (including innumerable deaths) which was inflicted on whole nations by such wretched tyrants as the nabobs of the Carnatic and Oude ... Assuredly, we applaud every instance which comes within our view of an interest taken by our countrymen in the welfare of the people in India, over whom their influence so widely extends.¹⁴⁷

There should be no doubt of Mill's sincerity in being willing to reduce human misery, although he might still be guilty of violating Hindu cultural dignity and self-respect. Walker, an Indophile, encouraged Mill by saying to him that, because of the publication of his *History*, 'an interest is now kindled in this country which has removed that destructive effects of ignorance and indifference'.¹⁴⁸ In fact, Mill himself was also impressed by Walker's passion towards the happiness of other societies.¹⁴⁹ As India was

¹⁴⁵ *The British Review*, 11 (1818), pp. 61, 84.

¹⁴⁶ *The Monthly Review*, (Jan. 1814), pp. 4-5.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, (June 1815), pp. 192-3.

¹⁴⁸ Letter from Alexander Walker to James Mill on 8 April 1820, NLS MSS 13725, f. 49. See also the Appendix to this thesis.

¹⁴⁹ Mill wrote to Walker 'I know a few men (many are not known to any one) in whom I am sure that the ruling passion is the love of mankind. But I never saw a man in whom I was so [-] and powerfully struck with the marks of that sentiment, as I was in you, after the first half hours conversation I had with you.'

virtually governed by military officials during the Napoleonic wars, Mill seemed to be particularly concerned with the problem of how to ~~create~~ a civil society in India. In composing the *History*, Mill wanted to break the monopoly in knowledge of India of the Orientalists, the monopoly in commerce of the East India Company, and the monopolistic control of public opinion by the military officials. Mill was more than anyone else in the beginning of the century responsible for bringing Indian affairs to the press. Through non-parliamentary endeavour, he campaigned to raise public attention. Sentiment, compassion and philanthropy cannot guarantee success in governing, however. Seeing the natives plundered and violated by constant wars between the British and Muslim princes, Walker expressed to Benjamin Jones, a secretary to the Board of Control, the view that

the people of Bombay will struggle hard to secure what they have acquired, and the vanity of the present Governor General will be flattered with the idea of planting his standard on the banks of the Indus, which marked the boundary of the expedition of Alexander ... I think it is very evident that the form of our Gover^t in India is no longer suited to the nature and extent of our dominion.¹⁵⁰

Benevolent or philanthropic sentiments were quite insufficient. An imperialist sentiment had to be supplemented by specific knowledge about government. Although much more unsympathetic towards Indian cultures and institutions, Mill agreed with Walker's concern about how the British government could adopt new forms to adjust itself to the new age. Mill proposed an assimilation policy, which would bring Western ideas into the country. He criticised the policies of Hastings and Jones as follows.

The project of Sir William Jones to obtain a code for the administration of justice among the Hindus, with the authority of their own lawgivers, was philanthropic and meritorious;

Mill to Walker 14th Sept. 1819, NLS MSS 13724, f. 114.

¹⁵⁰ Letter from A. Walker to B. S. Jones, 17 Nov. 1819, NLS MSS 13724, ff. 182 and 183.

but the mode in which it was undertaken was injudicious. His plan was, to employ the Brahmens, totally unaided by European intelligence; that is, to employ the lights of a people still semi-barbarous, - to compile a body of laws from the crude materials of old sayings, old poems, old practices, and old maxims regarded as laws, - when it was in his power to have applied all the mental powers of European knowledge and civilization.¹⁵¹

To modernise Asian nations was, for Mill, not only to fulfil imperial responsibilities but also to adopt an epistemological position different from an Orientalist one with regard to Asian civilisation. This is the reason why his theory of semibarbarism was called upon: Mill had to represent another Indian reality essentially different from that which had been created by some Jonesian Orientalists. The central task in Mill's *History* was to eradicate the ground on which the Orientalists intended to build the British government in India with 'crude materials of old sayings, old poems, old practices, and old maxims'. In Mill's view, the appellation of 'philanthropic' meant exactly the same with respect to India as it did with respect to anti-slavery campaigns in South Africa and Quakerism in North America. More importantly, James Mill believed that a judicious code of laws belonged to the stage of high civilisation. Indian legislative institutions were not qualified for the job of compiling a universal code for such a vast country with so many different peoples. The predominant problem which Mill devoted himself to tackling in *The History of British India* was how to create a centralised government in which British ideas and institutions could be transplanted into India and how Britain could monitor its operation at a distance, from England. For Mill, India as well as any other Asian country could only be bettered by adopting the western sciences of politics and legislation. These sciences were rooted in the rationality of the human mind. On the other hand, Asian society as a whole stood only at the semi-barbarous stage of

¹⁵¹ *Edinburgh Review*, (April 1810), p. 157.

civilisation. Thus, Europe, particularly Britain, had to disseminate useful knowledge and sciences across Asia, especially India; mere preservation of the ancient Indian institutions was not enough.

Although it is reasonable to compare Mill's sentiment of civilising the world with Wellesley's aim of conquering Asia, it is important not to confuse Mill's idea of 'imperialism' with that of the late nineteenth century. Late nineteenth-century imperialism was deeply saturated with the sentiment of nationalism and conducted in a spirit of exploitation. Mill's 'imperialism' was better defined by Christian universalism and eighteenth-century rationalism. Mill's sentiment towards human misery shared both Kant's political rationalism and Wilberforce's Christian humanism, while Robertson's tolerant policy of ruling India was a product of eighteenth-century morality. For instance, the original purpose of the British high court in Calcutta was to punish and discipline British subjects, rather than the Indians. The moral lesson of the establishment of the British high court was to restrain British aggression towards the Indians. On the other hand, Mill aspired to advance active ethics in the world. His credo was that you should share with others what you yourself are proud of and cherish. Robertson urged the British 'not' to behave as savages molesting and looting the Indians, while Mill urged the nation to do what a civilised nation ought to do, that is, civilise its subjects.

James Mill later rationalised his theory of benevolence in *An Analysis of the Phenomena of the Mind*, in which he argued that the pleasure and pain of our 'Fellow-creatures' should affect our own feelings. According to Bower, Mill followed David Hartley closely with regard to the theory of our fellow-creatures. Unlike Sydney Smith, Mill juxtaposed friendship, love of family, patriotism and love of mankind without

making any real discrimination between them. Because mankind was not an immediate object of sense, however, sympathy needed to be cultivated by philosophical education. To be an object of sense is to be an object that can be directly experienced. Thus, other people's ideas are not derived from sensation or impressions, but by abstract ideas communicated by others. Thus, without education, there is no way to know about the concerns of the other.¹⁵² Mill argued that Virtue consisted of four 'Titles' or actions: prudence, fortitude, justice and beneficence. All of those actions were other-regarding. Moreover, we were all able to gain 'pleasurable ideas', namely, 'affection' from these actions. Mill remarked that,

we have associations of pleasure with all the pleasurable feeling of a Fellow-creature. We have associations of pleasure, therefore, with those acts of ours which yield him pleasure. In the second place, those are the acts which procure to us one of the most highly valued of all the sources of our pleasures, the favourable Disposition of our Fellow-men. With our acts of Justice and Beneficence, therefore, we have associations of all the pleasures which the favourable disposition of other men towards us is calculated to produce.¹⁵³

Mill's moral philosophy gave his imperialistic sentiment a rational grounding. He believed the civilising process could change all races into a good condition of life and humanity.

When the African is delivered from the dread of being kidnapped and sold into slavery, when he feels his security, is taught the value of industry in improving his native soil, and is assisted in obtaining the necessities and the comforts of life, civilization will make a rapid progress: then, he will be prepared for the lessons of the Christian religion; then, he will rise to the dignity of a rational being, and all the noblest physiognomies of man will be displayed.¹⁵⁴

Without distaste for or discontent with certain cultural and social institutions, there will

¹⁵² George Bower, *Hartley and James Mill* (reprinted from 1881 edn., Bristol, 1990), pp. 148-55.

¹⁵³ Mill, *An Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind*, ii, 280ff, 286.

¹⁵⁴ *Monthly Review*, (Jan. 1811), p. 90.

be no projects for civilising or improving society. Mill absolutely believed that the advanced nations had a duty and a right to civilise others, as one has the right to educate others who possess less maturity of mind. His naive or wishful aspiration about the future of Africa was also applied to India when he launched his argument about the necessity of political reform in that country. Likewise, Mill raised the British public's attention to current affairs in South America.

It is now high time for the people of Great Britain to view with courage and with wisdom those great interests of theirs which are involved in the fate of South America. The question is not about the destination of a sugar island, or the occupation of a barren rock in the Mediterranean; - it is about the fate of twenty millions of men, and of a country of such boundless extent and varied fertility, as to be capable, perhaps, of affording a luxurious subsistence to all the existing individuals of the human race.¹⁵⁵

Mill explicitly expressed his view on the new colonialism: South America should not be a forbidden fruit locked up by the Spanish from others, but a treasured land beneficial for 'all the existing individuals of the human race'. Utility was a primary principle for government and colonisation.

The background of Mill's thought was certainly eclectic. There were, however, three major predominant intellectual influences as demonstrated above. The belief and interest in Reformation culture rendered Mill's intellect rigid and his tone dogmatic. Scottish philosophical history and the history of the mind and manners gave him a theoretical framework to measure and, more importantly, to reposition Indian society on the scale of civilisation. Finally, Benthamite Utilitarianism urged him to treat Indian society as a problem to be dealt with. This political perspective provided Mill with an angle from which he saw Indian society as having no legal equality, but with ominous

¹⁵⁵ *Edinburgh Review*, (July 1809), p. 345.

defects of legal procedure and the absence of liberty and security. The next chapter will discuss how Benthamite doctrines acted on the Scottish philosophical history in Mill's *History*.

CHAPTER 6

THE HISTORY OF BRITISH INDIA AND ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM IN BRITISH INDIA

i. Utilitarian politics

James Mill's predominant concern with British government in India was with how Britain should govern a less civilised empire. Answering this question meant defining a particular relationship between India and Britain. In Mill's view, Indian subjects should be distinguished from the British not in terms of their political or economic rights, but in terms of their existing state of culture, political institutions and morality. More importantly, he thought that Indian morality, character, and society as a whole could be ameliorated by political and legislative reconstruction. Despite his dislike of Hume's scepticism, Mill agreed with Hume's thesis that politics and government were the principal determinants of national character: 'That the moral character of the people depends on the government is a proposition in the science of man, and it is a rule without exception.'¹ Mill, however, unlike Hume, was not well disposed towards cultural diversity. His ideas on both civilisation and morality were progressive. In Mill's mind, the British government should be an instrument for improving Indian morality and civilisation. And the criterion Mill deployed to measure civilisation was utility. It was by appealing to the notion of utility that the progress of civilisation could be measured, and it was through increasing the level of utility that civilisation was to advance. Indeed, the more Mill involved himself in Benthamite reform after 1808, the more he became a

¹ *The Monthly Review* (Jan. 1816), p. 29.

propagandist, anxious to treat utility as a universal criterion for civilisation. No later than 1817, Mill proposed:

Exactly in proportion as *Utility* is the object of every pursuit, may we regard a nation as civilized. Exactly in proportion as its ingenuity is wasted on contemptible and mischievous objects, though it may be, in itself, an ingenuity of no ordinary kind, the nation may safely be denominated barbarous.²

The idea of utility can be easily captured, though in a simplified way, in the best known Benthamite maxim, as ‘the greatest happiness of the greatest number’.³ Mill believed that utility in government and jurisprudence should be regarded as the criterion of good government and legal institutions in particular and of civilisation in general. In his ‘Article of Government’, Mill demonstrated this conviction by tracing it back to the first principles of human nature:

That one human being will desire to render the person and property of another subservient to his pleasures, notwithstanding the pain or loss of pleasure which it may occasion to that other individual, is the foundation of Government. The desire of the object implies the desire of the power necessary to accomplish the object. The desire, therefore, of that power which is necessary to render the persons and properties of human beings subservient to our pleasures, is a grand governing law of human nature.⁴

Mill’s notorious prejudice against the aristocracy was also based on this conviction. Mill argued against the assertion that ‘a King or an Aristocracy may be satiated with the objects of desire, and after being satiated, leave to the members of the community the greater part of what belongs to them’. Instead, Mill remarked that this opinion was ‘founded upon a partial and incomplete view of the laws of human nature’.⁵ Humans were, by nature, inclined to maximise pleasures and desires.

² Mill, *History*, ii, 105. According to Winch, Mill first expressed exactly the same idea in 1817. See Donald Winch, *James Mill: Selected Economic Writings* (Edinburgh, 1966), p. 390.

³ James Mill, ‘Article of Jurisprudence’, collected in *Essays* (reprinted from 1825 edn., Bristol, 1992), p. 5. For similar expressions, see Mill, ‘Article of Government’ and ‘Article of Liberty of the Press’.

⁴ Mill, ‘Article of Government’, p. 9.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 11, 15.

Likewise, one of the reasons why Mill regarded Muslim government as superior to that of the Hindus was that 'Under the Mohammedan despotism of the East, nearly as much as in republics themselves, all men are treated as equal. There is no noble, no privileged class'.⁶ Besides, if it was true that the British constitution was 'a union of three simple forms', monarchy, aristocracy and democracy, it was still not good enough, because no one knew how to prevent the first two 'from combining to swallow up the third' power. This dark side of human nature and the constitution made Mill suggest that the purpose of government was to distribute happiness or power, and 'preventing every individual, or combination of individuals, from interfering with that distribution, or making any man to have less than his share.'⁷ But how could a country achieve this goal, and prevent those in power from oppressing the weak? Mill believed that the answer took different forms in Britain and India. From the outset of 'Article on Government', Mill claimed that the question 'with respect to Government is a question about the adaptation of means to an end.'⁸ In British politics, Mill believed that the best way to do good was for government to make sure that the majority of society was represented in Parliament. While Britain needed a wider, or even universal suffrage in order to guarantee the protection of individuals and the weak, India needed to be protected by an 'arbitrary' government. The reason Mill believed a discretionary government was required in India was because Indian civilisation was semi-barbarous. Mill confessed to Ricardo that 'I never can doubt that it is safe to give the people the benefits of a real representative government unless in very low states of civilisation'.⁹ More explicitly Mill

⁶ Mill, *History*, ii. 344.

⁷ Mill, 'Article of Government', p. 4 and *passim*.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁹ *The Works and Correspondence of David Ricardo*, viii. 52.

maintained:

The stage of civilization, and the moral and political situation in which the people of India are placed, render the establishment of legislative assemblies impractical. ... A simple form of arbitrary government, tempered by European honour and European intelligence, is the only form which is now fit for Hindustan. But that government should be one, the interests of which are identified with the interests of the country; and, arbitrary as it must be, such checks and influences might easily be applied, as would render it mild and paternal in its exercise.¹⁰

Societies with different degrees of civilisation should be governed by different means. This was a thesis that Mill found both in the works of Scottish thinkers and in that of Bentham. Mill's separation of means and ends in respect to Indian civilisation fell victim to a precarious dualism. I shall discuss this point in due course, but shall concentrate at present on Mill's idea of utility. First, it is crucial not to equate what Mill called 'A simple form of arbitrary government' with oriental despotism. Mill's notion of oriental despotism was a Montesquieuan one: 'The source of every thing in that vast empire is fear, the end of every thing, tranquillity'. Nothing was for 'individual happiness or virtue'.¹¹ On the other hand, although the form of government in India was designed as simple and non-representative, its essence was shaped by the liberal spirit of Britons.

It is highly gratifying to find British education, British intelligence, and lastly British virtue, so far prevailing over the habits of a life spent under military law, and under the influence of oriental manners, and oriental government, as to represent the freedom of the people, and the prosperity of the state as convertible terms; and works of utility, not of gaudy expense, as marks of civilisation.¹²

Indeed, only by understanding Mill's distinction between form and essence, and between simple or arbitrary government and oriental despotism can students appreciate why Mill so severely criticised Richard Wellesley's press censorship in

¹⁰ *Edinburgh Review*, (April 1810), pp. 155-6.

¹¹ *The Eclectic Review*, 6 (1810), 1027. See also *Literary Journal*, 2 (2nd series, Jan. 1806), 231.

¹² *The British Review*, 7 (1816), p. 319.

India. Wellesley, probably in order to prevent British Jacobins from leaking information to the French in India during the Napoleonic war, ordered every printer of a newspaper to 'print his name at the bottom of the paper'. 'No paper to be published at all, until it shall have been *previously inspected by the Secretary to the Government*, or by a person authorised by him for that purpose.'¹³ Mill thought that Wellesley's measure of censorship would 'establish the most uncontrolled despotism.' The freedom of the press played a crucial role in Mill's description of 'Extra-Parliamentary politics'.¹⁴ In his 'Article of Liberty of the Press', Mill identified a free press as the means of resisting an oppressive government. Mill allowed all sorts of resistance to government, except those that would require physical force preventing the execution of the laws.¹⁵ The liberty of the press was identical with the political rights of the middle class. 'Unless where the people can all meet in general assembly, there is no other means, known to the world, of attaining this object [reaching a general conformity of opinion], to be compared with the freedom of the press.'¹⁶ The freedom of the press was viewed as an instrumental substitute for such a general assembly, which was no longer attainable in a representative system of government. In Asia, political instability was the result of the absence of constitutional power to remove an unjust government and the absence of the liberty of the press through which the people could communicate 'their sentiments to one another'.¹⁷ Mill ridiculed John Barrow's claim that the Chinese printing industry meant that there was freedom of the press in China. 'The press in

¹³ *Literary Journal*, 2nd Series, 2 (1806), 206.

¹⁴ I use this term after the late Professor Hamburger. Joseph Hamburger, *James Mill and the Art of Revolution* (New Haven, 1963), pp. 7, 27.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 29. See also Mill, 'Article of the Liberty of the Press', *Essays* (Bristol, 1992), pp. 14-5.

¹⁶ Mill, 'Article of the Liberty of the Press', p. 18.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

China! and the freedom of the press! - what an abuse of terms!’¹⁸ More importantly, Mill viewed the press as an instrumental substitute for political rights, and Mill was consistent in criticising Wellesley’s suppression of it in India. As Mill believed it was expedient to establish a simple and arbitrary government to suit Indian social circumstances, a free press became, consequently, even more significant for political life in India. Mill distinguished between the principles of politics and ‘real’ politics. In practice, since it was best for Indian subjects to be governed by a non-representative government, the liberty of the press was hardly created for them: it was established for the benefit of the British subjects in India. In principle, it was created for the defence of the liberal spirit regardless of race in India, and for this reason Mill criticised Wellesley’s political measures.

Among that passive, languid, and peaceful people no spirit of resistance will be raised by the freedom of the press. They are too little acquainted with our language, they are too little enlightened, they are too feeble in mind, to be affected by the operation of a British press in India by any but the slowest and least perceptible progress. It is the mere lust, therefore, of unbridled power, it is the appetite of domineering, of holding his fellow creatures at his mercy, by which any man could desire to see the liberty of the press banished from that country.¹⁹

As a fundamental criterion for measuring the scale of civilisation, utility was not only relevant to Britain, but also to India. For instance, Mill used the notion of utility to criticise the Indian caste system. In his ‘Article of Caste’, Mill suggested that the four divisions of classes, which Mill described as a division of labour, obstructed human progress in India for two reasons. First, human desires inevitably multiplied when society improved. Thus, the institution of any fixed number of arts and trades was an institution for preventing the progress of mankind.²⁰ Second, social

¹⁸ *Edinburgh Review*, (July 1809), p. 427.

¹⁹ *Literary Journal*, 2 (1806), 208.

²⁰ Mill, ‘Article of Caste’, *Supplement to the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Editions of the Encyclopaedia Britannica*, (6 vols., Edinburgh, 1824), ii, 653.

stratification gave some classes privileges over others; therefore, not all the people were equally protected by the laws. 'The laws give to the Brahmens the most remarkable advantage, over the other classes of the community.' 'The difference of rank in India, is not a mere ceremonial distinction. The advantages which are conferred by it, or the injuries endured, are immense; and to the suffering party unspeakably degrading.'²¹ From Mill's Utilitarian point of view, the primary objective that the British government in India should seek to achieve was to extend judicial protection to the whole population regardless of race or caste.

ii. The better government of India

In Mill's mind no plan for achieving good government in India could be realised without disconnecting it first from the British government in London. The reason lay in two factors. First, most British politicians were interested in India not in order to improve its social institutions, morality or political life, but only to secure commercial profits. Second, the British government in India was inefficient, and failings were commonplace. Those two flaws sprang from the same cause: the monopoly of the East India Company. Mill criticised the mercantilism which lay behind British rule and the policy of deriving 'surplus revenues' from India to Britain. The purpose of British rule ought not to be to allow those who governed India to enrich themselves at the expense of the Indian economy. From Mill's point of view, the British did not 'let them [the Indians] grow rich as cultivators, merchants, manufacturers'. 'Looking at the subject, then, even in the most and cursory way, there is no man, we suppose, who is not perfectly satisfied that, whatever virtues we might expect in the ministerial government of India, *economy*

²¹ Mill, 'Article of Caste', p. 651.

certainly would not be one of them.’²² On the other hand, the prime purpose of government was to institutionalise and practise ‘an intelligent, vigilant and incorruptible administration of justice’, while commerce existed to exchange or make profits.²³

The British however had long developed mercantilist concerns in their colonies, including India. In the late eighteenth century, mercantilism was generally interpreted as a conviction that ‘wealth consisted in money, or in gold and silver’.²⁴ This theory helped the British to think of colonies as markets or vents for Britain’s manufacturing surpluses which could be exchanged for precious metals. In respect to the Indian market, however, this theory had not operated successfully²⁵: gold and silver had left Britain for India. Moreover, with the growth of government expenditure in India, the East India Company had decided to sell its lands to Indian subjects and collect revenues from these lands. The Company, then, consoled the British government and shareholders with the fact that, though it did not make much profit from trade, it did bring surplus revenues to Britain. Against the Company’s advocates, who asserted that ‘India has poured, and continued to pour, a perpetual torrent of wealth into the bosom of Great Britain’, Mill argued that the Company was, in fact, constantly in debt: ‘there is no *surplus revenue to bring home*, and none to expect ... there is, on the contrary, a large deficiency, which it has been necessary to supply from the wealth of Great Britain.’²⁶ Mercantilist concerns with the government of India were not practical because India was poor; and a poor country could not enhance the

²² *Edinburgh Review*, (April 1810), p. 153. Italics in original.

²³ *Ibid.*, (Jan. 1810), p. 273. For the detailed discussion of the end of government, see Mill’s ‘Article of Government’ and ‘Article of Jurisprudence’.

²⁴ Eli F. Heckscher, *Mercantilism*, tr. Mendel Shapiro (2 vols., London, 1935), ii, 176.

²⁵ *Edinburgh Review*, (Jan. 1810), p. 267.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, (April 1810), pp. 130, 137 and *passim*. Italics in original.

wealth of a wealthier nation. Moreover, according to Mill's theory of wealth, mercantilism in India was irrelevant to Britain's wealth: 'The benefit which is derived from exchanging one commodity for another, arises, in all cases, from the commodity received, not from the commodity given.'²⁷

Most important, for Mill, mercantilist or pecuniary views of the government of India resulted in the creation of a undesirable and unjust monopoly. Indeed, the British monopoly in India was an institutionalisation of the opinions of entrepreneurs or mercantilists about the British empire in India: the main purpose of having British India was to make profits out of India and to draw revenues back to Britain. In his 'Article of Colony', Mill argued that the idea of monopoly was inseparably concerned with profits, not good government. 'In the idea of deriving a peculiar advantage from the trade of the colonies, is necessarily included the idea of monopoly.'²⁸ The 'peculiar advantage' was that under monopoly the Indians had to purchase British commodities dearer than they would have done under a market based on free competition. Good government and monopoly were contradictory features in India. Mill's reasons for founding free-trade in Asia were straightforward:

Monopoly is the policy of an unenlightened and semi-barbarous age, freedom is the offspring of civilization and philosophy. Monopoly seeks only the advantage of a separate body of individuals, and pursues it at the expence of the nation to which they belong; freedom secures the advantage of the whole community.²⁹

Monopoly was concerned with how the British could buy cheaper labour and goods from India and sell British commodities dearer in that country. On the other hand, good government was concerned with India *per se*. Mill remarked, 'no government can be a good government, but that which has an interest, and a paramount interest,

²⁷ Mill, *Elements of Political Economy* (3rd edn., London, 1844), p. 125.

²⁸ Mill, 'Article of Colony', collected in *Essays* (Bristol, 1992), p. 19.

²⁹ *Monthly Review*, (Jan 1813), p. 23.

in the prosperity of the countries to be governed.’³⁰

Mill later repeated the same opinion in a moralistic category in his ‘Article of Colony’. ‘We may affirm it, as a deduction from the experienced laws of human society, that there is, if not an absolute, at least, a moral impossibility, that a colony should ever benefit the mother country, by yielding it a permanent tribute.’³¹ In reality India was unable to contribute to Britain’s wealth. In theory, India should be exempted from giving any wealth to Britain. On the other hand, Britain was expected to utilise collected revenues and to create a better government for India. Indeed, Mill thought that India was a part of Britain in economic terms. Fay maintains that ‘Adam Smith’s theory of foreign trade is internal trade internationalised.’³² Mill followed Smith’s theory of free trade and used it to explain why mercantilist and pecuniary views of the government of India were erroneous. Mill argued that, if a colony was part of the same country, ‘its subjects not part of a different community, but the same community; its poverty or riches, not the poverty or riches of another country but of the same country’, and so, ‘[i]s it not exactly the same sort of policy, as if Yorkshire were to be drained and oppressed for the benefits of Middlesex?’³³ Mill concluded that it was very evident that ‘whatever the mother country gains, the colony loses’.³⁴ Likewise, according to economic principles, competition creates benefits for society to its greatest extent in the long term.

Every where else, competition is the protector of those for whose custom it exists; - and the surest stimulus for the improvement of their commodities. Can it be believed, then, that the case should be reversed in India? - that the poor native, when he has nobody but the servant of his Sovereign to sell to, will make a better bargain

³⁰ *Edinburgh Review*, (April, 1810), p. 155.

³¹ Mill, ‘Article of Colony’, p. 18.

³² C. R. Fay, ‘Adam Smith, America, and the Doctrinal Defeat of the Mercantile System’, *Adam Smith: Critical Assessments*, ed. J. C. Wood (4 vols., London, 1983), iv, 51.

³³ Mill, ‘Article of Colony’, p. 22.

³⁴ *Ibid.*.

for his labour, than he could do with a dozen individuals, with no authority over him, each bidding above the other to secure it?³⁵

In the beginning of emancipation, there would be some inconveniences and reduction of profits, but 'the evil will thus correct itself'. Capital, rushing into the market immediately after the lifting of monopoly, would find its own equilibrium in the end. More importantly, 'individual traders make less, but *the trade* gain[s] more'.³⁶ In opposition to this, many East India Company supporters argued that without monopoly individual merchants would swarm to India. Then, 'the influx of Englishmen' would 'spoil the sovereignty'. They would 'make the people of the country revolt' and cause problems of government.³⁷ Against this argument, Mill argued that the only way of preventing conflict was not by restricting emigration but by practising a proper administration of justice.³⁸ 'What branch of government can be good, if the administration of justice be bad, on which every thing depends?', Mill asked.³⁹ Mill's hatred of monopoly had an additional cause. He thought that encouraging European emigration into India would essentially enhance the industry and civilisation of that country. Mill even entertained the extraordinary idea of sending a member of the 'British Royal family' into India as head of government.

It has occurred to us, then, that the only way to escape great evil, both to India and to England, is at once to give the latter country a government to itself. Instead of sending out a Governor-General, to be recalled in a few years, why should we not constitute one of our Royal family Emperor of Hindustan, with hereditary succession? The sovereign would then be surrounded by Britons; and the spirit of Britons would animate and direct his government: Europeans of all descriptions would be invited to settle in his country, and to identify their interests with those of the nation. The productive powers of European industry, under the protecting hand of a British government on the spot, would soon give new life and new riches to the state, and the commercial enterprise of Britons would find a field of boundless extent, every year presenting a more vast and precious produce, from which to cull

³⁵ *Edinburgh Review*, (April 1810), p. 131.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, (July 1807), p. 340.

³⁷ *The Monthly Review*, (Jan. 1813), p. 27, and *Edinburgh Review*, (April 1813), p. 416.

³⁸ *The Monthly Review*, (Jan. 1813), pp. 27-8.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

Thus, emigration should be encouraged, rather than prohibited, and India could be expected to flourish like America. 'Suppose a British society to be flourishing in Hindustan, as one is now flourishing beyond the Atlantic, is this a consummation, which, for the interest of Great Britain, it would become us to deprecate?'⁴¹

In short, economic affairs were self-regulating. The only thing that a government should do was make sure that justice and rights of property had been firmly established and protected, preventing the powerful from oppressing the weak. Once the people were sufficiently protected by the state, they would take care of themselves in economic life. Mill's hedonist philosophy of human nature suggested that man would pursue happiness and his desires relentlessly. The purpose of politics or government was only to create a stable and equitable environment in which individuals could freely compete and enjoy the fruits of their labour.

It is the distinction of man's nature, that he is a progressive being ... His peculiarity is, that he is susceptible of progression; and unless he is placed in circumstances which impose extraordinary restraints upon the principles of his nature, does invariably and incessantly make progress.⁴²

Government was a means to an end, ensuring that a stable and equitable environment was created and maintained. To Mill, replacing the existing government of the East India Company with a responsible and civilising one was essential for the maintenance of British power. It was, from his viewpoint, the best justification of British conquests in Asia. Nevertheless, some problems with regard to the government of India would remain. The most sinister one, in Mill's view, was that

⁴⁰ *Edinburgh Review*, (April 1810), p. 156. In this paragraph, 'the latter', meaning England should be read as 'the former', meaning India. It is Mill or a typographical mistake.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

⁴² Mill, 'Article of Caste', 653.

British ministers, the Crown and the aristocracy could exert a great deal of power in influencing the government of India. This would jeopardise Mill's principle of utility and radical reform in British politics. Therefore, following the argument that a pecuniary view of the government of India was opposed to both Political Economy and good government, Mill suggested that the government of India should be detached from that of Britain. Preferably, India should have its own autonomous government.

iii. Autonomous and panoptic government

Mill admitted that governing India was an expensive business because the stage of civilisation reached in India was low. Millar claimed that in the early ages of European feudal society, different kingdoms had no idea of common interests, but 'often engaged in mutual hostilities'.⁴³ Mill liked to think of the situation of India as analogous to medieval Europe. Mill maintained that Indian princes were not rational enough to calculate what were their common interests and that warfare was common in Asia. He claimed that 'the state of civilisation in the country was too low, - the mental imbecility as yet too great, to enable the princes to make a common cause against a common enemy.' On the other hand, the princes 'are making continual progress in the knowledge of art of war, and of all the arts of government in general.'⁴⁴ Under these circumstances, the British found it difficult to maintain their power in India without increasing their defence budgets. Thus, 'while the revenues have, from different acquisitions and annexations, been greatly enhanced, the expenditure has kept pace with the increase, and *has even outrun it*.'⁴⁵ Nevertheless,

⁴³ Millar, *An Historical View of the English Government*, p. 54.

⁴⁴ *Edinburgh Review*, (April 1810), p. 148.

⁴⁵ These are Charles Grant's words, with which Mill totally agreed, see *ibid*.

Britain had a duty to attend to the civilising of India. Then the British should give up overseeing the government of the Indian states. Mill's imperialistic attitude to civilising the world would not allow him to give up at this point.

We have already very strongly declared our opinion against the abandoning of the people to themselves; and whatever may be our sense of the difficulties into which we have brought ourselves, by the improvident assumption of such a dominion, we earnestly hope, for the sake of the natives, that it will not be found necessary to leave them to their own direction.⁴⁶

For some, this statement might seem to be in accordance with Kipling's 'White Men's burden'.⁴⁷ As a staunch proponent of Britain's civilising mission and convinced that government was the powerhouse of public morality, however, Mill certainly considered it important to maintain British 'political power' so long as it was possible in order to disseminate European ideas to India and to change Indian morality. Rather than withdrawing British government from India, Mill suggested that British government in India should be disconnected from Britain. First, Mill insisted that a good government, reducing deficits and operating justice, was the real reason for the British presence in India.

The systematic aggressions of the British alarmed the native rulers of adjacent states. But the extreme financial embarrassment occasioned by a plan of such extensive military combinations, rendered the efforts of that government only fatal to itself. ... We have already stated our conviction, that the same day which terminated our political power in India, will put a period to all our intercourse with that country. To maintain the former, a wise government is much more necessary than a strong army. An army composed of British troops may be sufficiently numerous to subdue, but must be altogether inadequate to retain it, against the inclinations of the people.⁴⁸

What really worried Mill was that the cost of defending India was causing political problems in Britain. Under such circumstances, Mill believed that the more

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

⁴⁷ Majeed suggests that the difference between William Jones's liberal imperialism and James Mill's Utilitarian imperialism is that the former holds the idea of the white man's burden while the latter does not. Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings*, p. 192.

⁴⁸ *Edinburgh Review*, (Jan. 1810), pp. 258, 273.

British revenue was appropriated for governmental expenditure in India, the more British politicians obtained a vent for their political patronage. 'In proportion as they can increase these [channels of expenditure], they increase their own power; in proportion as their expenditure is reduced, their power is diminished.'⁴⁹ As a political reformer in Britain, Mill certainly hoped that the use of aristocratic patronage would be reduced in order to diminish aristocratic influence in British politics.

Mill also expressed the view that it was natural that the powerful sought to maximise patronage. In addition, the British constitution seemed to promote this tendency. Consequently, in order to avoid the corruption of patronage by vested interests, and to administer or rule India properly, the government of India should be disconnected from British politics.

In absolute governments, the minister, depending upon nobody but the sovereign, is under the necessity of bribing nobody but that small number of individuals who have immediate access to his person. In Great Britain, the minister, depending not only upon the sovereign, but upon the whole body of the peers, and the representatives of people ... There is, therefore, unavoidably, under the British government, a perpetual tendency to multiply and enlarge the channels of expense, - to create places, - to increase the number and amount of salaries and emoluments, - to stretch, in a word, to the utmost, the power of obliging individuals, that is, of purchasing their support. ... Better, a thousand times, that all communication were at once cut off between Great Britain and India, than that the government of India should be engrafted upon the government of England. ... To unite, in the same hands, the government of England and the government of India, would be neither more nor less than to open a drain for pouring off annually, to the amount of several millions, the product of the land and labour of England. If the Company are unable to govern India without a deficit of two or three millions, it could not be governed by the British ministers under a deficit of five or six. ... the influence of the patronage of India in corrupting the British government.⁵⁰ [emphasis added]

Deficits and patronage went hand-in-hand through Indian passages from London. In his 'Article of Colony', Mill concluded his article by warning the British that

⁴⁹ *Edinburgh Review*, (April 1810), p. 151.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 151-3.

‘colonies are a grand source of wars, and of additional expence in wars; that expence, by which the ruling few always profit at the cost of the subject many; it is not probable that much of proof will be required.’⁵¹ Mill argued that only by disconnecting the government of India from London politics could both of these evils be avoided.

Likewise, Mill claimed that the reason Tipu was subdued by the East India Company was not because his kingdom was weak, but because of his arrogance and his ignorance of the fact that the ‘British ministry had now transferred the government of India to themselves.’⁵² Therefore, ‘it was not, in reality, the East India Company with which Tippoo had now to contend; but the English government and the East India Company combined, the resources of both of which were clubbed to provide for the war.’⁵³ Tipu’s fall was inevitable as he was faced not only with the East India Company but the power of the whole British nation whose wealth was, through ministerial authority, appropriated and devoted to the war.⁵⁴ Significantly, it was ministerial power permeating into the British government of India that Mill wished to prevent. It is worth noting that the claim that the ‘British ministry had now transferred the government of India to themselves’ referred to Pitt’s India Bill of 1784. The Act established a Board of Control, in which a committee composed of three members of parliament was designated to oversee Indian affairs. They even had the power of sending ‘secret orders’. Henry Dundas had been the chairman of that board for the first eighteen years of its existence. He ‘could, and often did, make vital policy decisions without consulting anyone else in England or India’.⁵⁵ This fact

⁵¹ Mill, ‘Article of Colony’, p. 33.

⁵² Mill, *History*, v. 326.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Stanley Wolpert, *A New History of India* (5th edn., Oxford, 1997), pp. 194-5.

could only encourage Mill, who was impatiently promoting the disconnection of the government of India from the influence of London politics.

In addition to the unjust expenditure that the 'ruling few' created at the expense of the 'ruled many', the fluctuation of British policy with respect to the government of India was another reason why Mill thought that the latter should be removed from the influence of British politics. Since the Company's Charter was renewed every twenty years and the Court of Directors and the Board of Control often had disagreements, the government of India was frequently disturbed. As a historian of British India, Mill, probably more than anyone else, was familiar with the fact that the British government's policies in India fluctuated with the change of Governors-General and changes within the Parliament.

Every fluctuation, whether of internal regulation or of foreign policy, unhinges the minds of the natives; they consider each as only a prelude to still wider deviations from a system which they had been taught to regard as permanent. It reminds them of the novelty of the rule, of the inexperience of their rulers, and gives a character of instability to all our institutions, absolutely fatal to their successful operation.⁵⁶

The changeable nature of policies made in Britain was essentially a result of the fact that British parliamentary men were 'eminently skilled indeed in general principles, but altogether unacquainted with the circumstances which should, in the present case, limit their application.' A long-term policy, 'without any wish to catch an ephemeral popularity, and equally uninfluenced by the dread of innovation on the one hand, and the cry of monopoly on the other', was what was required in the British government in India.⁵⁷

Mill also claimed that it would be advisable to have a new 'intermediate body' to distance India from British party politics so that British policy in India would not

⁵⁶ *Edinburgh Review*, (July, 1812), p. 53.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, (Jan. 1810), p. 272.

fluctuate so much. In Mill's time, the best choice for such an intermediate role was probably the Court of Directors or India House, where he later worked for seventeen years.

We do not pretend to say, that a body, nominated as the Court of Directors is, would naturally strike one, as being particularly well fitted to direct the councils of a great empire, situated on the other side of globe: and it is very likely that similar, or still more beneficial effects, might result from transferring the task to some other body equally unconnected with the fluctuation of part politics. - But in whatever way the management of this distant empire is to be engrafted on the general government, we do think that the existence of some such intermediate body is essentially necessary to resist the torrent of innovation to which it would otherwise be exposed.⁵⁸

Under the circumstances, India could then meet its own expenditure with the revenues that it collected within India.

The idea of an 'intermediate body' in the quotation above derived from Bentham's idea of panoptic architecture. Jeremy Bentham derived the architectural idea of the panopticon from his younger brother, Samuel Bentham, a technician in the Royal Navy, and he applied the design to work-places and prisons. The central idea of the panopticon was that policing agents could oversee the whole internal sphere of activities from a single point.⁵⁹ Mill believed it necessary for government to be able to scrutinise the acts of its agents intensely and constantly. In addition, he thought that the Benthamite idea of the panopticon, namely universal inspection, was particularly relevant because the mercantilist view of government had been guilty of letting its administrators 'plunder' India.

What Mill wanted was a Benthamite system of government, which made 'perpetual and immediate inspection' possible. Moreover, having a government 'on the spot' could only mean having a government that was autonomous in India and

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, (July 1812), pp. 53-4.

⁵⁹ See Jeremy Bentham, *The Panopticon Writings*, ed. by Miran Bozovic (London, 1995). For discussions of Bentham's campaigns for governmental support for the panopticon projects in colonies, see Janet Semple, *Bentham's Prison: A Study of the Panopticon Penitentiary* (Oxford, 1993).

disconnected from the patronage system in British politics. Consequently, such an autonomous government could provide the need for a professional civil administration. The civil servants in India would climb to government offices 'through a gradation of subordinate employments'. At the same time, by a long time residence in India, such a servant would 'have obtained a competent knowledge of the laws, manners, and languages of the people he is destined to rule'.⁶⁰

iv. Tensions in Mill's ideas for administrative reform of British India

There is a tension in Mill's thinking about India. On the one hand, he inherited from Scottish Enlightenment thought a sense of the importance of historical understanding in conceptualising the evolution of society. On the other hand, he proposed to employ Bentham's idea of Utilitarian politics in order to break the process of the historical evolution of a given society. Utility as a criterion of institutions is essentially a-historical, though rational. Utility is concerned with good or bad; whereas history is beyond judgement. Mill was, however, to judge history. Because he thought that the present state of India was analogous to the past of European history, Mill was enabled to criticise British political history, by planning reforms for India. Mill had a double purpose in writing the *History of British India*. First, the idea of utility was, for Mill, universal. He criticised English common laws and aristocratic classes. Accordingly, he censured the British government for creating a powerful landed class in India. At the same time, Mill used a simplified stadial theory of history to decide what means should be taken to reform the British government of India, in order to fulfil the end of utility.

As has been already argued, Mill's Utilitarian politics was intended to separate

⁶⁰ *Edinburgh Review*, (Jan. 1810), p. 273.

British politics and aristocratic patronage from Indian politics. It was also meant to replace mercenary views of the British government of India. Anglo-Indian government was to be defined in constitutional and political, not commercial terms. Mill saw Britain as the architect of civil society for India, rather than as a commercial investor. Mill criticised the unenlightened and pecuniary purpose of the British government in India on Utilitarian grounds. Moreover, utility as an idea of political freedom meant that more people were to benefit from political institutions. In order to achieve this end, the system of institutions should be so simple and clear that they could not be manipulated by the few. Mill promoted with great vigour the codification of Indian laws, for he believed - in accord with his general admiration of the clear and distinct - that a code of laws was universally better than unwritten laws or a common law, and under such a code, the many would no longer be oppressed by the arbitrary power of the few, *i.e.* the judges. In promoting the idea of a code of laws for India, Mill was, indeed, using India as a surrogate for criticising British politics.

On the other hand, a code of laws should also be suited to 'the circumstances of the society, and ... [should]... have the sanction of those names, and that authority, which the people revere'. This implied that a code of laws had two natures: form and essence. The form of the code was identical with the idea of utility, but the essence of the code, namely sanctions and laws, should vary from time to time and from place to place, in accordance with particular social conditions. Mill's theory of semi-barbarism was to provide a rationale for the view that India should be governed by different means to achieve the same end of utility. Mill criticised previous legislators and governors for their alleged ignorance of India in terms of stadial history. Mill admitted the importance of understanding local customs, laws and languages in order

to install the most suitable form of government in India.⁶¹ Good government would be impossible without a good knowledge of the subjects being governed, and a responsiveness to Indian local conditions.

In short, Mill believed that Indian society was at a stage of civilisation too low to merit having a representative government. The Indian princes were too uncivilised not to raise wars unpredictably. The minds of the Indians were too weak to appreciate the desirability of the liberty of the press. These assertions were similar to the Locke-Robertsonian theme that, because of the simplicity of environment in which they lived, the minds of the Amerindians were underdeveloped.⁶² Accordingly, codification or government should correspond to the local conditions and the state of the local civilisation. Mill proposed to the public that a code of laws was most desirable for the government of India because '[w]hat is wanted is - in the first place, a code of laws, in which the principles of substantial justice shall be accurately adapted to the circumstances of the society, and which shall have the sanction of those names, and that authority, which the people revere.'⁶³ Above all, government should take the historical development of India into account. Mill confessed to Walker that: 'I had persuaded myself... that the ideas of Sir William Jones, Dr Robertson & others, who led the public on this subject before my time, were too high with respect to the comparative progress of the Hindus &c, and led the British rulers

⁶¹ Mill, *History*, v, 255-6. Mill more than once complained about the insufficiency of British knowledge of their Indian subjects. See Mill, *ibid.*, i, pp. i, xix, and v, 419-20.

⁶² Mill criticised Jones and Colebrooke (the latter was a leading British Orientalist and president of the Asiatic Society at Calcutta after Jones). For the Orientalists, Hinduism was admirable because it resembled Christianity in teaching the idea of the 'unity of Divine Nature'. In Hindu teaching the unity appeared as 'the One'. Mill, however, argued that the Hindu religious doctrines were not as distinct as Christianity. 'Oriental scholars ought to have reflected that *one* is an epithet of very common, and vague application in the language of Asia.' 'Undoubtedly, if we assume to ourselves the licence of giving to the Hindu mythology a meaning to suit our own views, we may form out of it not only a sublime theology, but a sublime philosophy, or any thing we please.' In short, Mill separated the presentation of languages from the maturity of the mind. *Ibid.*, i, 258, 263.

⁶³ *Edinburgh Review*, (April 1810), p. 156.

of India into injustices to the Hindus, as being all fitted to their stage of society'.⁶⁴

v. Stadal history and legislation

Many critics have detected the influence of Bentham's 'Essay on the Influence of Time and Place in Matters of Legislation' on Mill's thinking about India.⁶⁵ Bentham thought it was possible to construct a universal code of laws which would accommodate the many different existing laws, manners, customs, and religions of the different inhabitants in the various parts of the globe. Bentham wrote that in England 'the requisite degree of impartiality and intrepidity taken together, might with better reason be expected from juries than in a judge', while in Bengal, where the form of government and national manners were inferior, a judge-based system was better than a jury system. And 'when such inferiority should disappear, the reasons for the difference between the institutions would become less forcible and perhaps vanish altogether'.⁶⁶ Bentham also maintained, due to the difference in natural and human causes, that there were no national laws worthy of transplanting into other countries without revision.

Not that laws of barbarous nations should therefore be eternal, while those of the most civilised demand a change. ... all they [legislators] need is to be possessed fully of the facts; to be informed of the local situation, the climate, the bodily constitution, the manners, the legal customs, the religion, of those with whom, they have to deal.⁶⁷

Mill's plan for giving a universal code of laws to India was unquestionably inspired

⁶⁴ Letter from James Mill to Walker, 6 Nov. 1819, NLS MSS 13724. See also the Appendix in the thesis.

⁶⁵ Duncan Forbes, 'James Mill and India', 24. William Thomas, *The Philosophic Radicals*, p. 105. Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings*, pp. 133ff.

⁶⁶ Bentham, 'Essay on the Influence of Time and Place in Matters of Legislation', *Works of Jeremy Bentham*, ed. John Bowring (4 vols., Edinburgh, 1838), i, 178.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, i, p. 180.

by Bentham's doctrines. Mill was probably first introduced to Bentham's theories by Dugald Stewart. In Stewart's interpretation of Bentham's *Defence of Usury*, Bentham extended 'Smith's system of natural liberty to an important branch of the art of legislation'. As Winch points out, Stewart 'prepared the ground for the collaboration that later took place between his pupils and Bentham'.⁶⁸

Mill's interest in legislation went far beyond Bentham, however. Two years before meeting Bentham, Mill had expressed his views about the problem of reconciling local circumstances with general laws in a review article on Gaetano Filangieri's work on legislation, published in the *Literary Journal* in 1806. Here, Mill agreed with Filangieri that laws should be adjusted to variable circumstances. Mill wrote,

The laws, therefore, which are adapted to the peculiar circumstances of one would in contrary circumstances be injurious to another. The laws which are good for a people of hunters or shepherds, would be extremely defective for a commercial and civilized people. Laws which produce good effects under a despotism, would be highly injurious to a free people. ... No legislative provisions are wise for which the minds of the people are not duly prepared.⁶⁹

Mill paid more attention to the influence of history or local conditions on legislation than many critics have assumed.⁷⁰ As we have seen, Mill wanted to provide Indian

⁶⁸ Winch, 'The cause of good government', p. 95.

⁶⁹ *Literary Journal*, 2 (1806), p. 229. One year later in the *Edinburgh Review* there was an article devoted to reviewing the same work. Winch attributes this article to James Mill, but *The Wellesley index to Victorian periodicals* attributes it, without certainty, to the famed medieval historian, Henry Hallam. Donald Winch, *James Mill*, p. 445. In the article in the *Edinburgh Review*, the author compared Filangieri with Montesquieu and remarked that Montesquieu 'sought, in the circumstances of nations, the spirit of laws which have been; the other, of those which ought to be. The one raised up the veil of time past; the other threw lights on futurity.' *Edinburgh Review*, (Jan. 1807), p. 357. For Gaetano Filangieri's role in Italian Enlightenment, see Franco Venturi, *Italy and the Enlightenment: Studies in a Cosmopolitan Century*, ed. Stuart Woolf and tr. Susan Corsi (London, 1972), particularly, pp. 213-21.

⁷⁰ Haakonssen remarks that Mill's *History* was written to attack Whig ideology. It is a presentation of 'theory versus history', 'reason versus tradition'. Haakonssen's judgement would be more convincing if he referred to *A Fragment on Mackintosh*. Knud Haakonssen, *Natural Laws and Moral Philosophy: from Grotius to the Scottish Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 304. See also the same author's 'James Mill and Scottish Moral Philosophy', *Political Science*, 33 (1985), 628-41.

society with ‘a code of laws, in which the principles of substantial justice shall be accurately adapted to the circumstances of the society’. Moreover, Mill’s interests in legislative reform needs to be placed in the context of the political and legislative reforms that had preceded it. The East India Company had commissioned Nathaniel B. Halhed to translate Persian laws and had published *The Gentoo Code* (1776), William Jones’s *Institutes of Hindu Law* (1794) and Henry T. Colebrooke’s *Digest of Hindu Law* (1798) before Mill had begun to think about India. These earlier codes of laws were intended for the use of British officials in the courts or general administration of India.⁷¹ As Lorenzen puts it, the British had ‘step by step [taken] direct control and recognised the government according to their own needs and perspectives’ since 1765.⁷² From Mill’s point of view, the British had changed Indian society; but the point was not whether the British should change the society, but how to change it for the better. In his mind, previous legislative reforms made by earlier British Governors-General, particularly Lord Cornwallis, were not judicious. In agreeing with Filangieri and Bentham that laws should vary according to social conditions, Mill remarked that previous British innovations in legislative reform in India were unsympathetic to the Indians and thus unjust to them. This was because of the defects in British knowledge of Indian society and because of an incorrect assessment of Indian civilisation.

If the mistake in regard to Hindu Society, committed by the British Nation, and the British government, be very great; if they have conceived the Hindus to be a people of high civilization, while they have in reality made but a few of the earliest steps in the progress of civilization, it is impossible that in many of the measures pursued for

⁷¹ Teltscher argues that the British government was not aware of the fact ‘legal digests, or *ribandha*, existed within Indian tradition and kept evolving through the eighteenth century’. Kate Teltscher, *India Inscribed*, p. 194.

⁷² D. Lorenzen, ‘Imperialism and the Historiography of Ancient India’, *India: History and Thought: Essay in Honour of A. L. Basham*, ed. S. N. Mukherjee (Calcutta, 1982), p. 88.

the government of that people, the mark aimed at should not have been wrong.⁷³

Mill thought that the primary task that the British government should focus on governing India was how to improve the agriculture of the country by creating incentives for the cultivator. Mill was to prescribe a governing policy for India similar to that which Smith described for agricultural progress in North America. Smith argued that before reaching the stage of a commercial or manufacturing society, a society should invest all its available capital in improving its agriculture. 'It is likely to increase the fastest revenue to all the inhabitants of the country, as they will thus be enabled to make the greatest saving'. And '[i]t has been the principal cause of the rapid progress of our American colonies towards wealth and greatness, that almost their whole capitals have hitherto been employed in agriculture'.⁷⁴

vi. Mill's criticism of Cornwallis's legal reforms

Mill thought that the most unsatisfactory and unjust measure of British administrative reform in India was the revenue system created by Cornwallis, Governor-General of Bengal (1786-1797). Indeed, Mill was to be preoccupied with revenue problems during his period at India House. Not long after he was employed to take the assistant examiner post in India House, Mill confessed to Ricardo what was most central in his mind: 'But I must now ... go to talk about Zemindars and ryots, and think of the means of protecting the latter against the former - no easy task'.⁷⁵ The system that Cornwallis had created in India was generally called the 'Permanent Settlement'; that is, the East India Company had auctioned its lands out to individual great landlords,

⁷³ Mill, *History*, ii, 107.

⁷⁴ Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, i, 366.

⁷⁵ Letter from James Mill to Ricardo, 14 Aug. 1819, *Works and Correspondences of David of Ricardo*, viii, 53.

the *zemindars*. These landlords were, accordingly, made the real proprietors of the land. In addition, the *zemindars* were charged with policing the regions. That is to say, they were 'vested with the powers of judicature and police'.⁷⁶ Mill believed that this measure had created a class of landowners similar to its counterpart in England, the English aristocracy. Mill thought that this revenue system and judicial reform were harmful because they did not stem from or correspond to Indian traditions or Indian attitudes to property and law.

Mill suggested that in India, as in all Asian countries, property was in the hands of the sovereign.⁷⁷ This was to argue that all Asian societies were despotic.

... it is of material importance to remark, that, up to the time when the interests of the Company's servants led them to raise a controversy about the rights of the Zemindars, every European visitor; without one exception that I have found, agrees in the opinion, that the sovereign was the owner of the soil.⁷⁸

Mill agreed with British government to break the despotic system of property in India. But he suggested that it would have been better if lands had been given to small farmers. In Mill's eyes, the British had created an aristocratic class in India simply because of their English prejudices. No doubt the intention of the permanent settlement was generous, Mill admitted, as it was 'conducive at once to the increase of its produce, and the happiness of the people'. But the means adapted for the end were full of 'the aristocratic ideas of modern Europe, [and so] the aristocratic person now at the head of the government, avowed his intention of establishing an

⁷⁶ Mill, *History*, v, 332. For an excellent study of Cornwallis's zemindary system and Utilitarian reform, see Eric Stokes, *English Utilitarians and India*, particularly ch. 1. However, Stokes overlooks the fact that Mill's objection to Cornwallis's system was rooted in the Scottish Enlightenment.

⁷⁷ For instance, Mill quoted Raffles' statement, 'It is established from every source of inquiry, that the sovereign in Java is the lord of the soil'. Also, Mill quoted Barrow's authority and said 'It is not disputed that in China the whole property of the soil is vested in the Emperor'. Mill, *History*, i, 211-3.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 213-4. At this point, Mill's view was again in contrast to Robertson's conviction that Indian society had an idea of the inheritance of property. Thus, Indian society was a commercial society.

aristocracy, upon the European model'.⁷⁹

Mill implied that the specifics of European history did not provide a universally applicable model for other nations to follow. British society progressed, but not because it had a feudal constitution or aristocratic class. Hence, in order to have agricultural improvement and security of liberty India did not necessarily have to follow British history. Although the Indians did not know how to achieve a better quality of agriculture and civil society, the British could guide them and develop plans for them. However, if British history was not a good example for the improvement of India, what could be? Mill answered that the future of Indian society did not rely on learning examples of British history, but on the principles of political economy, government and general knowledge of human nature.

In Mill's mind, the best way of encouraging agricultural improvement was to give incentives to farmers rather than to landlords. Mill remarked: 'There are three sets of circumstances, whose operation, where it is felt, prevents the improvement of the soil at the hands of its proprietors: first, ignorance; secondly, possessions too large; and thirdly, too much power over the immediate cultivators.'⁸⁰ According to these principles, the great landlords, the *zemindars*, were not the best men to produce agricultural improvement. Adam Smith and David Hume both maintained for theoretical reasons that small landowners were more in favour of agricultural improvement than extensive proprietors.⁸¹

... the man, who already enjoys a vast accumulation of wealth, must regard, with comparative indifference, small acquisitions; and that the prospect of increasing his great revenue, by slowly adding the painful results of improvement, cannot operate very powerfully upon his mind. It is the man of small possessions who feels most sensibly the benefit of petty accessions; and is stimulated the most powerfully to use

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, v, 339, 340-1.

⁸⁰ Mill, *History*, v, 346 and *passim*.

⁸¹ Martha McLaren, 'Scottish Concepts of Asian Despotism', 486.

the means of procuring them. It is on the immediate cultivator, when the benefit of his improvements is allowed to devolve in full upon himself, that the motives to improvements operate with the greatest effect. That benefit, however, cannot devolve upon him in full, unless he is the proprietor as well as the cultivator of his fields; and hence, in part, the backwardness of agriculture in some of the most civilized portions of the globe.⁸²

This statement recalls Smith's objection to slavery. Smith's moral philosophy of industry explained that the slave did not cultivate for his own interest and so he would not labour to good effect or improve his labour; thus, there was no need for slavery. Cultivation should be carried out by free men, and the reward would be social freedom. Mill accepted this moral philosophy and applied it to small farmers, or the Indian *Ryots* whom Mill defined as the 'immediate cultivators'. Likewise, Mill maintained that '[w]ith moderate taxes, under a government which protects from foreign violence, the only thing necessary for happiness and the *rapid* improvement of the people of India, is a good administration of justice.'⁸³ Security gave incentive to industry, which in turn created property. In the light of the principles of political economy and 'human nature', even the most civilised society in existence had its own defects in government. Therefore, not all the institutions from Europe should be esteemed as the ideal standards to be implanted in India; to attempt to do so only indicated the prejudices of the European masters of India.

In Mill's view, Cornwallis's judicial reforms could also be regarded as flawed because of the influence of European prejudices.

Among the other prejudices of those who at this time legislated in India with so much of good intention for the people of Hindustan, were the prejudices which owe their birth to the interests, and hence to the instructions of lawyers. ... This unhappy instrument of justice was not forgotten in the present reforms. For courts of law, provided for a people, among whom justice had always been distributed in the method of simple and rational inquiry, was prescribed a course of procedure, loaded with minute formalities; rendered unintelligible, tedious, and expensive, by technical

⁸² Mill, *History*, v, 347.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 407. Emphasis added.

These expensive 'technical devices' had practical effects: they contributed to the delay of justice. For Mill, as for Hume and Smith, the progress of civilisation depended on the security of property and on the efficient administration of justice.

Mill was well aware that positive laws had a limited effect on everyday manners. The law itself could not prevent all the bad actions perpetrated by men, and men's inhibitions played as important a role as legal prohibitions in creating a secure social order. Mill characteristically described the development of moral sentiments as the result of the state of the human mind.

The state of the people is such, that trustworthy instruments cannot be found. In a more favourable state of the human mind, that large portion of the field of action which it is impossible to reach with the terrors of law, is protected by the sentiments of the people themselves: they distribute towards individuals their favour and abhorrence, in proportion as those individuals observe or violate the general rules on the observance of which the happiness of society depends; and of so much importance to every man are the sentiments with which he is regarded by those among whom he lives, that without some share of their good opinion, life itself becomes a burden.⁸⁵

Following Montesquieu's view of Oriental society, Mill believed that India was a formerly theocratic constitution, governed by religious institutions and texts. Further, he thought Indian society was far behind commercial society. Accordingly, he believed that Indian society was devoid of genuine moral sentiments. This absence of moral sentiments, therefore, called for the establishment of a better system of penal laws.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 355. Mill seemed to take for granted that his readers should perfectly understand what he meant by 'minute formalities' both in English and Indian courts. He did not provide detailed descriptions or analysis. Nevertheless, in this comment, Mill seemed to compare lawyers' function with that of the priests of the Catholic or Anglican Church. We lack information about Mill's early religious belief, but he no doubt shared the Presbyterian hostility to 'priestcraft'. It will be a productive and interesting subject to study how Lutheran reformation culture was regarded by Mill as the grand model of the advancement of civilisation. I believe in the previous chapter my remarks only scratch the surface of this question.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 407-8.

In India there is no moral character. Sympathy and antipathy are distributed by religious, not by moral judgment. If a man is of a certain caste, and has committed no transgression of those ceremonies by which religious defilement or degradation is incurred, he experiences little change in the sentiments of his countrymen, on account of moral purity or pollution. In employing the natives of India, the government can, therefore, never reckon upon good conduct, except when it has made provision for the immediate detection and punishment of the offender.⁸⁶

It is evident that when Mill composed this statement in his *History*, he had become irreligious. Thus, he separated the moral character shaped by religious sanctions from those developed by civil society. The absence of moral sentiments in Indian society was a circumstance important for English legislators to consider.

Unlike John Adams, who followed Alexander Dow in claiming that there were very few crimes committed in India, Mill agreed with Henry Strachey, the Judge of Circuit in the Benares division, that the crimes committed by gang robbers, or dacoits, increased under the British government of India: 'It increased, to a degree highly disgraceful to the legislation of a civilised people.' The ceremonial aspects of the court affected Indian society more than the English. Because of the backward state of civilisation in India, its society was not as secure as that of Britain, and the ceremonial delays caused by the legal system made things worse. The delay of justice increased the problem of social security.

The tedious forms through which the judges had to travel, permitted them to decide so small a number of causes in a given portion of time; and the delay and uncertainty which attended a technical and intricate mode of procedure, afforded so much encouragement to dishonest litigation, that the pace of decision fell prodigiously behind that of the multiplication of suits; and the path of justice might, in some places, be regarded as completely blocked up. ... The trouble, loss of time, and expense, that attends a criminal prosecution on the present system, is in our opinion a serious evil ...⁸⁷

In a more 'philosophical' language, Mill ascribed the lack of success in Anglicising India to a British failure to think of their legal system as anything but perfect.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 408.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 377, 397.

Another cause of the disorders of India, a cause, too, of which it is highly important to convey a just idea, is the overweening estimate which our countrymen are prone to make, not only of their own political contrivances in India, but of the institutions of their own country in the mass. Under the influence of a vulgar infirmity, [t]hat *Self* must be excellent, and everything which affects the pride of *Self* must have surpassing excellence, English institutions, and English practices, have been generally set up as a standard, by conformity or disconformity with which, the excellence or defect of everything in the world was to be determined.⁸⁸

This was to argue that the English experience was not necessarily a valid mould for other nations; however, Mill did not advocate developing Indian laws and customs as a means of developing a legal code in India,⁸⁹ nor did he believe that a despotic or absolute monarchy was needed in India to strengthen the severity of the laws. Kames had suggested that absolute monarchy and severe laws were necessary before civil and polite society could become well advanced⁹⁰, but while Mill might have agreed with Kames and Smith that regular government helped to refine moral sentiments, and, consequently, helped to restrain behaviour and reduce crimes, he did not suggest solving the problem of crime through the principles of civic morality. Instead, Mill was to employ Benthamite impersonal inspection or state control to ameliorate social disorders. In India, the lack of moral sentiments should be compensated for by a more efficient and strict judicial system. Mill agreed with Sir Henry Strachey, who argued that he was not sure of the necessity of ‘increasing the severity of punishment’. ‘Before I can form a judgment of the efficacy of such remedies, I must be certain that the punishment reaches the offenders.’ Strachey further remarked: ‘We can not say that men become dacoits, because the punishments are too lenient;

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 406-7.

⁸⁹ H. H. Wilson, the great critic of Mill’s *History*, suggested that the British government should adopt local usage in order to govern the Indians. But Wilson seemed to suggested also that the Indians should not be fed or given Western values. In his words: ‘[t]he adaption of local means to local ends should be carefully considered, if the latter are to be attained in India as well as in other countries.’ *Ibid.*, v, 407n.

⁹⁰ Kames, *Sketches*, ii, 225.

they become so, because their chance of escaping altogether is so good.’⁹¹ Mill’s critique of British government in India was aimed at the form rather than the manner of that government. How the government should operate effectually was more important than how the severity of sanctions could be used to prevent subjects from committing crimes.

To afford in any tolerable degree the protection of law to the people of India, is a far more difficult process than it is in England; and for its accomplishment, a far more perfect system of legal and judicial provisions, than what is witnessed in England, is indispensably required.⁹²

Mill, then, offered an interesting argument to explain why punishment should be light in order to suit the peculiar social conditions of India. As has been already discussed, Mill suggested that the advancement of human minds meant the maturing of the human rational capacity, and that this was in proportion to the power of being able to distinguish right from wrong, truth from fiction and facts from imagination. Being rational meant being able to locate memory in its right place and associate impressions or ideas with the right train of thought. The Indians, Mill argued, thought that women should be deprived of the right of giving evidence in court; but they themselves were unable to provide proper evidence.

... their imbecility of mind; so faint are the traces of their memory; so vivid the creations of their imaginations; so little are they accustomed to regard truth in their daily practice; so much are they accustomed to mingle fiction with reality in all they think, and all they say; and so inaccurate is their language, that they cannot tell a true story, even when they are without any inducement to deceive.⁹³

The defect of being unable to give evidences was the same as being unable to

⁹¹ Mill, *History*, v, 397-8.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 407.

⁹³ Mill gave a reference to Samuel Johnson’s description of the Highlanders: ‘[I]f they do not know what they tell to have been true, they likewise do not distinctly perceive it to be false’. The analogy demonstrates well how Mill followed the eighteenth century’s fashionable idea, ‘from the savage to the Scots’. *Ibid.*, 435.

compose history. Because of the difficulty in gathering sufficient evidence to convict criminals, the severity of the laws in India acted and resulted not in the ends they were meant to achieve, but in the opposite, because ‘a judge, whose humanity is considerable, will not execute a terrible punishment, where he is not perfectly assured of guilt’.⁹⁴ And the consequence was that ‘in the great majority of cases, the perjurer, for want of certain evidence, escapes, and the crime receives encouragement’.⁹⁵ This condition, thus, was to be addressed by his panoptical theory about the administration of justice. Mill suggested that no punishment should be inflicted ‘the evil of which cannot be repaired, if the innocence of the prisoner should afterwards appear; and then to prescribe unsparing conviction as often as the balance of probability inclines to the side of guilt’.⁹⁶ Bentham’s penitentiary house was, accordingly, a practical means to provide this ‘reparable’ or ‘reformatory punishment’. Convicts could return back to society after leaving these ‘hospitals for the mind’. As ‘an organ of justice’, the panopticon prison house, being ‘so well adapted to the exigencies of every community, would, with extraordinary advantage, apply itself to the extraordinary circumstances of Bengal.’⁹⁷ This was indeed an extraordinary conclusion for Mill to draw: his analysis of the local and peculiar circumstances of Indian society had resulted in his calling for a universal system of judicial reformation.

The most puzzling statement Mill made with respect to local circumstances was that he believed the Indians, in general, did not object to being governed by a foreign power.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, v, 434.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, v, 434-5. As usual, Mill repeated this point, *ibid.*, v, 439-40.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, v, 441.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*.

An opinion is very generally entertained, but in which I confess I do not participate, that it would be good for the natives of India to be more largely employed in the business of the government than they now are. It appears to me that the great concern of the people of India is, that the business of government should be well and cheaply performed, but that it is of little or no consequence to them who are the people that perform it. The idea generally entertained is, that you would elevate the people of India by giving them a greater share in their own government; but I think that to encourage any people in a train of believing that the grand source of elevation is in being an *employé* of government, is anything but desirable. ... Let the means of accumulation be afforded to our Indian subjects; let them grow rich as cultivators, merchants, manufacturers; and not accustom themselves to look for wealth and dignity to successful intriguing for places under government; the benefit from which, whatever it might be, can never extended beyond a very insignificant portion of the whole population.⁹⁸

Mill concluded that 'I consider that the feeling of degradation, from being governed by foreigners, is a feeling altogether European. I believed it has little or no existence in any part of Asia.'⁹⁹ This was written at a time when Britain herself was being saturated by national sentiment. Nationalist independence movements in Europe had started to gain momentum - in Greece for example. On the other hand, many Asian countries were still governed by the principles, derived from those of the Moghul and Chinese empires. Asian nationalism would not take shape until the late nineteenth century.¹⁰⁰ Thus, Mill was right to distinguish the Asian nationalist movements from those of Europe.

It is important to note that Mill was not at all a cultural relativist. After he had published the *History*, Mill became more radical in favour of Utilitarian causes.¹⁰¹ Mill seemed to reduce his previous emphasis that lawmakers should consider local and historical conditions. Instead, the idea and need of the clear and distinct became more conspicuous in Mill's thought. In his 'Article of Government', Mill had concluded that as 'the surface of history affords, therefore, no certain principle of

⁹⁸ *Parliamentary Papers* (1831), v, 396.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*...

¹⁰⁰ C. Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 44.

¹⁰¹ William Thomas, *The Philosophic Radicals*. David Lieberman, 'Historiographical Review from Bentham to Benthamism', *The Historical Journal*, 28 (1985), 199-224.

decision, we must go beyond the surface, and penetrate to the spring within'.¹⁰² The spring was the mind. Mill regarded social and political institutions as the cause of the defects of the social mind and civilisation. During his period in office at India House, Mill optimistically urged the modernisation of India. Mill held that local circumstances were important to the extent that they modified the making of laws. These local circumstances, according to Mill, were not the residue of timeless national wisdom, still less the object of national identity. In *A Fragment on Mackintosh*, Mill was predominantly concerned with reform in Britain. He consciously played down the importance of local circumstances in his efforts to promote reform.

There are two sets of circumstances, to which it is necessary to attend in the making of laws. There are circumstances, which all nations have in common. There are other circumstances, which each nation has peculiar to itself. The first set of circumstances, those which nations have in common; at least nations which are nearly on the same level in the point of civilisation; are beyond comparison the most important; and were laws well adapted to them, the modifications required for the particular circumstances of each particular country, would not be very great.¹⁰³

Mill wrote these remarks to challenge Mackintosh's conservatism. Mackintosh maintained that 'the sudden establishment of new codes can seldom be practical or effectual for their purpose; and that reformation, though founded on the principles of jurisprudence, ought to be not only adapted to the peculiar interests of a people, but grafted on their previous usages, and brought into harmony with those national dispositions on which the execution of laws depends.' Mill had no time for this reasoning; it 'is the slang of those who are the enemies of all reform. ... as the argument is equally good at all succeeding times, it is an argument for everlasting

¹⁰² Mill, 'Article of Government', p. 9. The term of 'the Collective Mind' is derived from Ronald Inden, and quoted from Mackenzie, *Orientalism*, p. 27. See also Ronald Inden, *Imagining India*, ch. 3.

¹⁰³ Mill, *A Fragment on Mackintosh* (reprinted from 1835 edn., Bristol, 1992), p. 142.

postponement.’ Mill believed Mackintosh’s words to be little more than rhetoric. Mill certainly failed to understand that the real crucial point should be how to detect, represent and present ‘national dispositions’, ‘on which the execution of laws depends’.¹⁰⁴ On the other hand, Mackintosh failed to appreciate Bentham’s preoccupation with the problems legislators faced when asking how far they should take local conditions into account in making laws. This was probably because Bentham’s ‘Essay on the Influence of Time and Place in Matters of Legislation’ was not published until 1835. Mackintosh professed that ‘Mr Bentham, indeed, is much more remarkable for laying down desirable rules for the determination of rights, and the punishment of wrongs, in general, than for weighing the various circumstances which require them to be modified in different countries and times in order to render them either more useful, more easily introduced, more generally respected, or more certainly executed.’¹⁰⁵ Thus, it was natural and expedient for Mill to lean much more on the universality of rational jurisprudence than he did in *The History of British India*. None the less, it is notable that in his *History* Mill had viewed history or historical knowledge from the viewpoint of positivism and utility. Compared with many Scots literati, such as Hume, Smith and Millar, Mill was much less entitled to be called an historicist. For Mill, understanding Indian history, like understanding Indian society, was the only means of making a plan or reform project to improve that society. The intelligence and understanding of individuals played a decisive role in any reform project. Many Scots of the Enlightenment believed in spontaneously generated order, which made the idea of generating a reform project in a mechanical way virtually impossible. Likewise, Mackintosh, as in his criticism of Elphinstone

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 136, 147. See also James Mackintosh, *Dissertation of the Progress of Ethical Philosophy* (1830, reprinted from 1836 edn., Bristol, 1991), p. 290.

¹⁰⁵ James Mackintosh, *Dissertation of the Progress of Ethical Philosophy*, p. 289.

quoted before, believed that historical knowledge was imperfect, as the power of foresight was limited. Thus, no reform project should attempt to be comprehensive or radical. Indeed, the controversy between Mill and Mackintosh very much concerned the difference between comprehensive and step-by-step reform. From Mackintosh's viewpoint, Elphinstone and Mill were radical. From Mill's point of view, Mackintosh did not support reform at all.

Last, it is, perhaps, constructive to discuss the controversy over Mill's view of history with regard to 'gradualism'. Burrow argues that 'Mill has a philosophy of history which teaches him to be a gradualist in India, just as he has a philosophy of mind which teaches him to be a democrat in England....'¹⁰⁶ Winch agrees with Burrow's interpretation of Mill's philosophy of history; he also describes Mill as a gradualist reformer, 'but of a rather impatient kind'.¹⁰⁷ Haakonssen, in his erudite study of Scottish moral philosophy, disagrees with this interpretation. Following Stokes' excellent study of Utilitarian reform in India, he argues that Mill believed that good government was the panacea for all the ills of Indian society. Mill proposed to 'reconstitute the legal framework on India *completely* by introducing a Benthamite code and attendant institutions.'¹⁰⁸ Haakonssen thus advances the view that 'there is no gradualism whatsoever' in Mill's view of administrative reform in India. Stokes, in his work, did not pay any attention to the conjectural history of the four-stage theory which certainly shaped Mill's view of Indian society and his project of reform. It is true that Mill, like Dugald Stewart, was much more concerned with the future

¹⁰⁶ Burrow, *Evolution and Society*, pp. 61-2.

¹⁰⁷ Donald Winch, 'The cause of good government', p. 119.

¹⁰⁸ Knud Haakonssen, *Natural Law and Moral Philosophy*, p. 302. The emphasis is mine. See also Haakonssen, 'James Mill and Scottish Moral Philosophy', 628-41, esp. p. 635. It is probably worth noting that neither Burrow nor Winch uses 'gradualism', but talk of 'gradualists'. We may need to follow their steps so as not to be involved too much in the linguistic or ideological maze of '-ism's.

and with forward-looking politics than Smith's generation had been.¹⁰⁹ It is misleading, however, to see Mill as an entirely thorough Benthamite, ready to adopt the Benthamite code 'completely' and unchanged. Mill had been a mature thinker and writer before he met Bentham. Indeed, as Forbes has argued, Mill contributed to Benthamite thought by introducing the ideas of philosophical history into the a-historical mode of thought of Bentham. The importance of the marriage of Scottish Enlightenment thought with Bentham's universal code of laws can not be overstated.

Mill did not agree with the contents of Jones' code of Hindu laws because he thought that the code contained 'old' maxims and proverbs, and as a consequence would not be able to fulfil the needs of a new era in which many ethical codes, including those of Muslims and Europeans, existed together. Mill believed that a legal code ought to be based on 'enlightened' English views of the law, rather than on a set of obscure and mysterious religious texts. It is interesting to see that Mill seemed to separate knowledge of society and laws from the 'code' of laws. Following Bentham's criticism of Blackstone's support of the English common law tradition, Mill described that tradition as belong to a barbarous age. Mill regarded the law as matter and end, and the code as form and means. From Mill's point of view - in which the form of the code was separated from the matter of laws - the term 'Benthamite code' could be misleading. In Mill's mind, codification was but a means and, thus, universal. On the other hand, the content of laws varied from place to place. Mill disagreed with Jones' codification for India because he thought the contents, not the codification, were outmoded. On the other hand, England had no

¹⁰⁹ For a contextual view of Smith's and Hume's intellectual attributes in respect to historical tragedy and social or generation *Angst*, see N. T. Phillipson, 'Toward to a Definition of Scottish Enlightenment'. For a highlighted and selective view of Smith's pessimism, see John Dwyer's *The Ages of the Passions*.

code at all. Mill characteristically rebuked Mackintosh for asserting that Bentham wanted to give a 'new' code for the nation. In the context of the common law, the codification itself was already new; that was the reason Mill praised Jones's Hindu code of laws as a benevolent and philanthropic task.¹¹⁰ Burrow is right to compare Mill favourably with Macaulay. Macaulay's complacent ignorance of Indian literature led him to read nothing but Greek during his period of official duty in India. By contrast with Macaulay's Anglicising educational plan, Mill wholeheartedly supported Wellesley's educational project of providing British civil servants with local languages and a knowledge of local legal institution and customs. In spite of being a reformer, Mill, nevertheless, remarked,

For digesting the law into an accurate code, such men [Indian pundits] would be altogether unqualified; but they might lend their peculiar and local knowledge to him to whom the task is assigned; and they might easily and effectually annexe the authority of religion to his definitions, by subjoining quotations from their sacred books, and declaring the words of the code to be the true interpretation of them.¹¹¹

Mill was far from being a revolutionary, as he did not discard altogether Smith's, Robertson's or Filangieri's teaching that '[n]o legislative provisions are wise for which the minds of the people are not duly prepared'.¹¹² Because of the stadial theory of historical progress, Mill consciously acknowledged that it was important to allow local knowledge to shape his imperial project.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Mill, *A Fragment on Mackintosh*, p. 147.

¹¹¹ Mill, *History*, v, 427.

¹¹² *Literary Journal*, (Jan. 1806), i, 229.

¹¹³ Of course, Mill's effort to preserve local usage was considered by conservatives or Orientalists, such as Horace Wilson, as thin and insignificant. Mill, *History*, v, 407n. Alexander Walker suggested that the British need not legislate for the Indians at all. 'This country should never perhaps attempt to legislate for India. There will always be a greater chance of doing mischief than good. We are too much separated by nature and situation, and still more by manners, to be accurate judges of what is best for their interest and happiness. The greatest favour that Great Britain can confer upon India, is to see that the laws of the country are fairly administered. They are quite sufficient for the security of life and property, which are the main ends of Justice. An established and constant mode of process which the Natives understand is preferable to any changes, which a fortuitous Gov^t like ours can never hope to ripen into maturity.' Letter from Walker to Mill, 21 Nov. 1819, NLS MSS 13724, f. 190. See also in

Mill was actually more militant than many other Britons of his time in proposing governmental reform in India. This is why Haakonssen is right to question Mill's claims to be a 'gradualist'. Haakonssen concluded that Mill was no gradualist because he rejected philosophical historians' 'most basic lesson: that these institutions form part and parcel of the social life of a people and that they cannot for the purpose of reform be separated from the rest of intractable, historically-conditioned matter of society'.¹¹⁴ This statement is problematic. First of all, it would have been naive of Mill to have argued that political institutions were distinct from social life. As has been discussed, Mill did consider local circumstances, the Hindu pundits' knowledge of Hindu laws and the historical conditions of India relevant in making laws. Haakonssen's statement implies that Mill was a revolutionary in India. The image of Mill the revolutionary was probably created by setting Mill's reform programme in the context of Jones's and Robertson's thinking. In Jones's and Robertson's view, there seemed to be no problems or conflicts among the members of Indian society. In their understanding of the Anglo-Indian relationship, it was the British who should be blamed. The Indians were thought to be highly civilised and obedient to the British; thus, the deficits and disorders in India were all created by British policies and wrongdoings. Indian society itself was not a problem for British government and mercantilist expectations. On the other hand, the task that Mill committed himself to was precisely to find out the social and political problems in India. According to Mill, the financial deficits in the British government in India were unavoidable because India was not a commercial society, and military expenditure could not be reduced since the society was a number of federal

the Appendix.

¹¹⁴ Haakonssen, *Natural Law and Moral Philosophy*, p. 302.

connections: independent kings frequently waged wars against one another. Moreover, Mill detected a conflict of interest among the Indian castes, particularly the landed class and the small farmers. From Mill's point of view, Jones and Robertson were not conservatives: they simply misunderstood the nature of Indian society. Likewise, it is hard to describe Mill as a revolutionary: he simply thought he was doing a job to re-direct and re-reform the existing policy, such as putting Cornwallis's legal reforms on the right track.¹¹⁵

Haakonssen however is sensitive enough to point out the fact that Mill did not pronounce on when India would be in a fit state to be granted a representative system of government. He infers that Burrow's 'gradualism' applies in this case:

... Burrow must have in mind, on Mill's behalf ... With the introduction of a rational utilitarian legal framework, man's natural individualism in his pursuit of his interest, namely pleasure, will gradually gain strength amongst the Hindus. ... As the natural pursuit of interests becomes the common pattern, the Hindus will in time come to recognize that this is what they are doing - which, as we saw, is the qualification for representative government. The problem is just that, as far as is known, there is no evidence that this is what Mill expects or even hopes. On the contrary, he went out of his way to argue against the introduction of Indians into any part of the higher administration of their country, and he 'obviously believed India was a case where autocracy needs not lead to tyranny'. So, even as far as government itself is concerned, there is little to be said for Mill's application of a social and historical perspective.¹¹⁶

Indeed, to deny that Mill was a gradualist is to deny at once that Mill believed in evolution. Haakonssen's argument is a version of the classic argument that Mill simply wrote to maintain British power in India. Mill did not anticipate a day when Indian society would have made rapid progress to self-government. But, theoretically speaking, it was not because Mill was a gradualist that he might have thought it

¹¹⁵ It is very likely that Marx was inspired by Mill's analyses in developing his theory of class struggle. Marx studied the works of Smith, Ricardo, Mill and Bentham under Engels' encouragement. The result of his study led to his critique of Hegel's *Philosophie des Rechts* and his own *Oekonomisch-Philosophische Manuskripte 1844*. See D. R. Kelley, *Human Measure: Social Thought in the Western Legal Tradition* (Cambridge, Mass., 1990), p. 262.

¹¹⁶ Haakonssen, *Natural Law and Moral Philosophy*, pp. 303-4.

premature to think or hope of giving self-government to the Indians. What Haakonssen refers to as Mill's apparent reluctance to establish representative government in India is based on evidence that Mill gave to the Select Committee of Parliament in 1831, which I have discussed above.¹¹⁷ If we regard the evidence that Mill gave in 1831 as a statement of his final thoughts about the future of British power in India, then, all that Mill had written before that date was problematical, or even hypocritical. In 1819 Mill wrote to Ricardo, 'I never doubt that it is safe to give the people the benefits of a real representative government unless in a very low state of civilisation.'¹¹⁸ Would Mill have deceived one of his few close friends in private correspondence about politics? Considering this confession, Haakonssen's argument seems paradoxical. As this thesis has argued thus far, Mill was certainly a evolutionist and gradualist, despite the fact that he might be guilty for mistakenly asserting that Indian society was at a very low level of civilisation. Like Stewart, Mill still believed there were many steps that a society 'had to' pass. Like Stewart, he also believed that human society could progress more rapidly than before. He suggested that Indian society could move up on the scale of civilisation quicker if a British government could be freed from ^{the} British prejudice of transplanting English institutions into India.

Mehta, in his recent study of British political thought about India, asks why liberals, like Mill, did not discuss the possibility of representative government in India, while the conservative Burke was radical enough to support Irish and American independence.¹¹⁹ Mehta does not provide us with any new information

¹¹⁷ In fact, one critic uses exactly the same evidence to argue that Mill was a gradualist. See Winch, 'The cause of good government', pp. 117-8.

¹¹⁸ *The Works and Correspondence of David Ricardo*, viii. 52.

¹¹⁹ Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire*, pp. 2ff. In fact such a phenomenon does not stop with Burke or John Stuart Mill. William Jones was a radical in Irish affairs, but an exemplary conservative with

about Mill's thought on representative government in India, but he sees James Mill as 'a supporting advocate' for John Stuart Mill's belief that democracy was impossible in India.¹²⁰ Indeed, both Mehta and Haakonssen warn students of James Mill that it is crucial to decide what Mill thought about the element of 'time' in reforming Indian society to adopt a democratic constitution.

It is difficult to determine how soon Mill thought that Indian society would be ready for democracy, although according to his moral philosophy and Utilitarian politics he could have had no doubt that such a stage would eventually be reached. But it was evident that James Mill thought the first step in establishing a good form of civil society in India was to remove despotic rulers. That is to say, Mill thought about democracy in India in the negative: he wanted to first destroy the negative side of despotism. James Mill's idea of British administrative reform in India was to reject any sort of despotism, whether political, religious or military. Mill did not only criticise Muslim despotism, but also Hindu theocracy. He also strongly objected to Wellesley's censorship of the press. He proposed the establishment of a free press in India to allow the people to criticise their government. 'A sufficient antidote would exist, in a free press, under the unsparing operation of which governments would remain ignorant of none of their defects.'¹²¹ It is true that Mill thought the Indians were too servile to benefit greatly from a free press, but he did not leave out the possibility that the Indians, as legitimate subjects of the British empire, could use the press as a weapon to check the abuse of governmental power. The problem of the free press in India embodied Mill's ambivalence towards reform. On the one hand,

regard to Indian government, from Mill's point of view. So is Robert Southey. See Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings*, chs. 1 and 2.

¹²⁰ Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire*, p. 81.

¹²¹ Mill, *History*, v, 406.

Mill thought, in line with his Utilitarian politics, that the free press had to be established in India regardless of the conditions. On the other hand, Mill believed, in line with the stadial theory and the theory of the historical mind, that the Indians were not yet actually to be benefited by the institution. On this point of a new despotism by censorship in India, the radical Mill was curiously in agreement with the conservative Burke. Because Mill was confident about the function of the press in limiting governmental power, he rather arrogantly claimed that in India 'autocracy need not lead to tyranny'. Should we, then, infer that autocracy together with a free press were Mill's ideal combination for Indian society at this time? Or, was Mill, as Haakonssen and Mehta imply, being disingenuous when he criticised the suppression of the press in India?

On one level, Mill employed Utilitarianism as the basis for a critique of political society in Britain and India. He criticised the British government for transplanting English political practices into India without considering the problems of doing so. But he failed to show how his reforms could be adapted to the needs of a 'servile' culture, which stood in need of enlightenment. He was uncertain as to whether gradualism would lead to enlightenment. It is clear however that Mill believed that different stages of civilisation should be ruled by different means of government. Obviously, this 'stadial' view of history is a characteristic in Mill's work that he brought into Utilitarianism from the thought of the Scottish Enlightenment.

vii. The emphasis on state power

As has been demonstrated, Mill supposed that local conditions and social morality in India ought to be considered when calling for the greater efficiency of legal prosecutions. According to Mill's moral philosophy and political economy, the

immediate cultivators should be protected to guarantee personal liberty and security of property. Mill suggested that, due to the local conditions in India, to improve the effect of legal prosecution in the country the state had to take charge of policing. Mill also suggested that, in the light of his understanding of human nature, it was always better to have a centralised state power set above the individuals or class invested with judicial or policing powers. Thus, Mill simply did not agree with Cornwallis's decision to bestow policing power on the *zemindars*. Quoting the magistrate of Burdwan, he said

Few of the Zemindars and farmers, of any respectability, reside on their estates and farms. Allow them to exercise a power equal to the purposes, and to vest with it by delegation, their agents or under farmers, the worst and most mischievous consequences are to be apprehended from their abuse of it.¹²²

Cornwallis believed that the personal quality of individuals would determine the goodness of government. He appointed in each district the same man as 'collector of revenue, judge of the Dewannee Adaulut and moreover head of the police'.¹²³ Cornwallis believed that where 'the collector was a man of humanity and justice, the people, as under the worst government on earth, would no doubt be protected'.¹²⁴ To Mill, Cornwallis's expectation of 'paternal feeling' among the *zemindars* was far too optimistic and was doomed to failure.¹²⁵ Such an administrative measure put a despotic power in the *zemindars*' hands which could be used to oppress the *ryots*.¹²⁶

¹²² *Ibid.*, 415. It is worth commenting that the zemindar system was abandoned by 1806. After 1807, many administrators in the Indian government suggested re-introducing the system. Mill's determined objection to this civil system should be seen in the context of fearing that it might return.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, v. 351.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, v. 352.

¹²⁵ Winch, *James Mill*, p. 425. Also *Parliamentary Papers* (1831), v, 291.

¹²⁶ Mill maintained: 'The Zemindars, who formerly exercised a power almost despotic over the districts consigned to their care, and who maintained a large establishment of armed men, with a commission for the suppression of crimes, were enabled, as often as they had activity and good will, to suppress by arbitrary execution all violent offences but their own.' Also, 'the powers necessary for an efficient police cannot be intrusted to the Zemindars, without ensuring all the evils of a gross and barbarous despotism.' Mill, *History*, v, 412, 418.

Contrary to the good intentions of Cornwallis's government, the paternal administration of the *zemindary* system produced in fact a face-to-face confrontation of the *zemindars* and the *ryots* that turned out to have a paralysing effect on Indian society.

The relation established by Cornwallis between the ryot and the Zemindar, was remarkable. The Zemindar had it in his power to pillage the ryot; but the ryot had it in his power to distress the Zemindar. He might force him to have recourse to law for procuring payment of his rent; and the delay and expense of the courts were sufficient to accomplish his ruin.¹²⁷

Accordingly, an impersonal mechanism for both collecting revenue and policing was demanded; and the natural way to create such an impersonal apparatus of administration was through the state. In Mill's view, Indian social disorder was the product of the unjust power of the *zemindary* system rather than the weakness of the state.

Whenever you fail to a certain extent in assuring protection to the innocent, and punishment to the guilty, the criminal is enabled to employ the great instruments of government, punishment and reward, in his own defence. Such is the *military* strength of the British government in Bengal, that it could exterminate all the inhabitants with the utmost ease; such at the same time is its *civil* weakness, that it is unable to save the community from running into that extreme disorder, where the villain is more powerful to intimidate than the government to protect.¹²⁸

It is easy to see that Mill emphasised state power in his plan for the *ryots'* revenue system. Mill maintained that Indian tenants were exploited and oppressed by the *zemindars*. They were allowed no rights at all on the land. Mill, then, suggested that the British government should buy back the lands that the *zemindars* wanted to sell. Afterwards, such lands should be 're-settled with the *ryots* upon their old hereditary principle.'¹²⁹ Mill defined the *zemindary* and *ryotwar* revenue systems in

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 371.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 410.

¹²⁹ *Parliamentary Papers*, v (1831), 294.

these terms:

... the zemindar collects from the ryots by his own agents. In the case of the ryotwar system, the collections are made by officers of government; every ryot is understood to make his bargain with the government without the intervention of any middle-man.¹³⁰

Moreover,

The object is, that government should never hand them over to the zemindars again, but that they should remain the ryots of government, from whom the government collector will collect individually. In other words, those estates are to become ryotwar ...¹³¹

Government and *ryots* (presumably the majority of the subjects) were brought into direct contact without the need for middle men, the *zemindars*. If the *zemindary* weakened civil government because the latter deliberately transferred power to the former, the *ryotwar* enabled the state to centralise power and act through a rational administrative apparatus. Mill believed that *ryotwary* was the best hope that Indian society could emerge from the poverty which was responsible for the social disorder in the country. Mill quoted Sir Henry Strachey's evidence when describing the problems of Indian society with regard to poverty.

The vices and the crimes of the people proceed from their poverty and ignorance. And I do not conceive they are likely to grow much richer or wiser, while the present state of things exists. ... Most, but not all, dacoits begin their evil practices from necessity. A ryot, finding some difficulty to subsist, either from his imprudence or ill fortune; a peon, or other servant, losing his place, and unable to procure another, a cooly, finding no employment: such persons, of whom in this populous country there are always many thousands, often take to stealing; are corrupted by vicious companions; drink spirits; and are gradually led on, from impunity and habits of idleness, to become dacoits ...¹³²

Given his belief in this sociological explanation for the crimes and social disorder in India, Mill naturally proposed that the major and immediate objective for the British

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 290.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 294.

¹³² Mill, *History*, v. 424.

government in India was to help the Indians grow rich as cultivators, merchants, manufactures, instead of seeking places in government. Mill was certainly so ignorant about Indian national sentiment, as to propose to create a centralised government run by the British. But it is this ignorance that allowed him to utilise Smith's idea of politics and social opulence in the Indian context. Although Mill was in accord with Charles Grant's Christian-centredness in respect to morality, he complemented this moralism with a Smithian sociological explanation and solution.

The mode of increasing the riches of the body of the people, is a discovery no less easy than sure. Take little from them in the way of taxes, prevent them from injuring one another; and make no absurd laws to restrain them in the harmless disposal of their property and labour. Light taxes and good laws; nothing more is wanted for national and individual prosperity all over the globe.¹³³

Clearly, Mill believed it was only the state or government which would care about the collective wealth of society, while individuals cared only about their personal riches. Social poverty, disorders and the supposed moral degradation of the Indians were thought to arise from the very same fountain of the imbecility of the Indian social mind or the low stage of their civilisation. Individuals, therefore, should not be trusted or invested with power.

In Mill's view, the state occupied the role of the middle rank of society by proxy. Mill maintained that the progress of society went hand-in-hand with the appearance and progress of the middle class.

The progress of society is no less effectual in reducing their aptitude to become the instruments of resistance to arbitrary power, than it is in extinguishing among the higher orders the disposition to resist it. ... In a refined society, the lower orders are enured to habits of incessant industry. ... A middling class is itself, in fact, a creature of civilization. It had no existence in the rude state of society; and it increases as the

¹³³ Winch compares Mill's idea of the 'happiness' of the people with Smith's idea of social wealth. 'Little else is requisite to carry a state to the highest degree of opulence, but peace, easy taxes. and a tolerable administration of justice; all the rest being brought about by natural course of things.' Quoted from Winch, 'The cause of good government', p. 118.

On the other hand, in India, there were only the oppressed classes and the oppressing classes.¹³⁵

There are no gentlemen, in whose honour and probity, in whose spirit and activity, government can repose confidence. There exists not, between the common people and the rulers, a middle order, who feel a common interest in the prosperity of the state; who love their countrymen, who respect their rulers, or are by them respected; who either could, or, if they could, would, even in a case of the greatest exigency, exert themselves heartily and effectually, each in his own sphere, for the public good. Such a set of men in the society is here unknown.¹³⁶

Thus the state, the public good and a middling class were linked and identical in Mill's mind. His view of the role that the state should play in India led him to insist that British guardianship demanded the creation of a middle class in India. It was a radical political idea that a powerful state in India would create a middle class. In Mill's mind, this could lead Indian society to a civilised society without following the historical steps taken by Europe - from feudal society to despotic monarchy, and hence to mixed monarchy or democracy. Mill wanted to create a short-cut for India such that the society would one day reach the state of being powerful and opulent without the process of the emergence of a landed class and the decline of the aristocracy. Obviously, Mill presented a very confident version of the middle-class's world view. And when Mill identified the middle class as the creator of history, he destroyed the balance between stadial theory and utility, in favour of Benthamite Utilitarianism.

¹³⁴ *Edinburgh Review*, (Feb. 1811), p. 417.

¹³⁵ Readers should not be misled by Marx's language of class struggles. Mill did not even admit Indian society had an aristocratic class. It is fair to say that Mill did not find Indian social classes equivalent to those in European society except with regard to the relation of suppression and being suppressed. This is the reason why he did not agree that British government should introduce such a class into India. On the other hand, Mill described the Brahmans as a powerful and suppressing class. Mill was certainly unlike Marx who believed all societies in the world should go through the very same historical stages and social structures into capitalist, socialist and communist societies.

¹³⁶ Mill, *History*, v, 416.

But it would be a mistake to think that James Mill had discarded Scottish philosophical history altogether. Some months after *The History of British India* had been published, he communicated to Napier that: ‘The next work which I meditate is a History of English Law, in which I mean to trace, as far as possible, the expedients of the several ages to the state of the human mind, and the circumstances of society in these ages, and to show their concord or discord with the standard of perfection’.¹³⁷ If Mill had written this history of English legal evolution, the pillars of the work would have been the Robertsonian historical conception of the mind, and Benthamite Utilitarianism. From the methodological perspective, the unwritten history of English laws would have been close kin to *The History of British India*. In short, by 1820, Mill still took stadial history and Utilitarianism as equally valid methods of understanding history and civilisation. While stadial thinking helped to create a historical dimension for Benthamite Utilitarianism, the latter, in turn, gave Scottish philosophical history a teleological meaning. What interested Mill in *The History of British India* was not Indian society as a type of society, but the question of at which stage of civilisation India stood in comparison with the standard of perfection of human institutions. It was one of the conspicuous psychological attributes of modern society that the present was not good enough. In comparison with the ideal standards of perfection, both British and Indian societies had defects. For his part, however, Mill warned his readers that reforms in India should be carried out by means that were suitable for its social conditions. Such a thought was part of the intellectual legacy that Mill inherited from the Scottish Enlightenment.

¹³⁷ Letter from James Mill to Macvey Napier on 5 August 1818. *Selection from the Correspondence of the late Macvey Napier*, ed. Macvey Napier Jr. (London, 1879), p. 20. At this time, Mill was not yet employed by East India House. Those who believe that Mill wrote of India and worked at India House in order to support non-Indian interests, like Kopf and Mittle, might re-consider their conclusion if they took this evidence into account.

CONCLUSION

Mill's *History of British India* was a significant extension of the thought of the Scottish Enlightenment. It was also a reaction to contemporary British political life and to a new perception of Asia in the post-French Revolution age. As a Scottish Enlightenment thinker, Mill learned to view civilisation as progressive. In the post-French Revolution age, he sharpened this progressive view of society, by propagating reforms, derived from Benthamite Utilitarianism. Although the *History of British India* was based on Scottish theories of stadial history and civil society, it rejected William Robertson's and William Jones's interpretations of Indian civilisation. It concluded that Indian society was not a commercial society. To modernise India, the development of agriculture and the security of property were of primary importance.

This thesis has introduced the three Scottish languages used to discuss Asian societies during the Scottish Enlightenment. They were based on the four stages theory, Montesquieu's theory of despotism and political economy. Out of these, the Scots developed three languages in which to discuss Asian societies. The wealth of Asia was theorised by Adam Smith in the language of political economy. In the language of politics, Asia was described as a place without civil society, because individual property rights were absent. In the language of the history of manners, Asia was regarded as barbarous. They developed a general image of Asia as a rich continent, which, as well as being commercial and despotic, practised barbarous customs such as female slavery and infanticide. The Scots did not consider these characteristics as contradictory because they

fitted their image of oriental luxury. This encouraged them to discuss the problems caused by the decline of feudalism, the rise of kingly power and the general problem of luxury and civil society. Asia was treated mainly as a means by which the Scots could discuss their own society.

This study has also demonstrated how the main Scottish sociological or anthropological study of human societies was reinforced by some minor writers, such as John Logan and William Alexander in the 1780s; and by some important texts relevant to the Orient after the 1790s. Logan's and Alexander's discussions of Asian societies emphasised Montesquieu's theses about despotism and the history of manners of Asia by comparing Asia with Europe. However, writers in the late eighteenth century were more interested in contrasting the savage with the civilised, than developing an historicist understanding of society. In such comparisons, Asia was made to appear as lying towards the middle of the scale of civilisations. Charles Grant, Charles Strachey, George Macartney, George Staunton and others provided more first-hand observations of Asia, which challenged earlier views of Asian wealth and emphasised the backwardness of Asian manners and political institutions. These minor writers tended to analyse Asian societies from an organic perspective, in which despotism was represented in every relationship and institution in Asia. This holistic view of Asian societies encouraged reformers to think about reforms, which might remodel the whole society and all its institutions. Charles Grant thought Hinduism should be replaced by Christianity, while James Mill thought the concept of property rights and the judicial system in India should be reformed.

This thesis has argued that Mill was particularly influenced by Adam Smith, Adam

Ferguson, William Robertson and Dugald Stewart. And yet, it also claims that Mill's relation to the Scottish Enlightenment was idiosyncratic. As a result of his study of divinity at Edinburgh, Mill's view of civilisation was saturated with Presbyterian values of simplicity and free will. He had benefited from Smith's ideas on political economy and he shared his concern with justice. He agreed with Smith's analysis of the development of North America, and he tended to treat it as a model for his own study of India. Accordingly, he promoted the free colonisation of India. But he did not adopt Smith's view of unintended consequences. Mill also shared Ferguson's concern with the vitality of society and Stewart's view of the lineal progress of society. These views of society led him to favour the 'masculinity' of Muslim society in contrast to the Hindu characteristic of 'docility'. Above all, as this study has argued, Mill was influenced by Robertson's *History of America*. Robertson described the Amerindians' state of civilisation as a product of a savage mind. In addition, he tended to level the various cultural achievements of different Amerindian tribes, and he considered them all as rude or barbarous.

Above all, this study has argued for the importance of Francis Jeffrey and the *Edinburgh Review* in shaping Mill's *History*. The concept of semibarbarism was a product of contrasting the savage and the civilised. Jeffrey and other *Edinburgh* reviewers described Asian societies as semi-barbarous or half-civilised. In Jeffrey's non-materialist explanation of the tri-stadial theory of history, based on legal evolution, the idea of semi-barbarism became a popular way for viewing Asian societies in the early nineteenth century. This thesis has argued that Mill developed and further theorised Jeffrey's concept of semi-barbarism, and in so doing, employed a holistic view in

describing all principal Asian nations as belonging to the state of semibarbarism, just as Robertson had argued that all Amerindians belonged to the state of a savage or rude society.

This study has also illustrated that in the post- French Revolution age, writers had different perceptions of Asia and concerns with it. India or Asia became more explicitly a problem for the British with the loss of the North American colonies and the expansion of the empire in the East. The characteristics of Asian societies were no longer seen as a reflexive means of thinking about British or Scottish society. Instead, they represented problems for the new generation, as they addressed the practical problem of governing India. This study has argued that Mill's imperialist sentiment led him to propose a centralised state governing machine for India. Mill suggested that such a powerful state was needed in India, if only to check the crown and government ministers' patronage. Moreover, a new state machine would be an assertion of the government's sense of responsibility which had been sacrificed to the monopolistic and mercantilist aims of the British government in India. In propagating his administrative reforms, Mill found himself involved in an ideological battle against his contemporary Orientalists. Many Orientalists and British military officials in India developed during the Napoleonic wars developed a cultural ideology of Hindu superiority over the Muslims. Mill rejected this ideology and replaced it with his own, which claimed that Islamic institutions were superior to those of the Hindus. He portrayed the development of Asian history as a lineal historical progress. While other Orientalists justified British conquests in India on the ground that they defended Hindu society and liberty against Muslim despotism and war-like barbarism, Mill justified the British empire on the grounds that, as the civilised

successor to the Moghul empire, the British had a duty to fulfil what Akbar would have liked to have done, but was unable to do.

Although Mill viewed Indian society through the prism of European history, this thesis has argued that he did not think that English institutions were entirely suitable for India. He did however believe that Scottish moral philosophy and Benthamite state control were particularly relevant in governing India. As Smith's and Stewart's moral philosophies taught him, Mill thought that economic improvements and liberty were the necessary preconditions of civilisation. Mill accepted Hume's 'philosophical politics' that regular government was crucial for the enhancement of civilisation. Moreover, Bentham's ideas on administration and government showed him the importance of a centralised state in India, that would eliminate the aristocratic system which Cornwallis had tried to create in the Permanent Settlement, and would also assist in improving Indian civil society and its related manners and moral sentiment.

This thesis has also argued that in order to employ the Scottish theory of history and the historicist view of civilisation as a vehicle of reform, Mill singled out utility as the standard measure of the progress of civilisation. In comparison with European society, Mill thought that India was different qualitatively because it lacked a powerful middle class, which could regulate society in order to fulfil its own multiple desires. In Mill's view, a major imperial civilising mission was to create a middle class for India. Once this class came into existence in India, economic improvements would be possible – in the field of agriculture in particular, and civil progress would soon follow. It was for the benefit of society that regular government should be organised and security or property should be defended. In Scottish moral philosophy, these were the key features of

civilisation.

But how influential was Mill's thought in British imperial theory and administration? Were his moral philosophy and reform projects accepted and executed? These questions are crucial and worth enquiring into, but they lie far beyond the concerns of the present study. A few words, however, might indicate what direction such a future study might take. In general, the intellectuals from 1836, the year Mill died, to the end of the nineteenth century were not particularly sympathetic to his philosophy of reform. First, many Orientalists and imperial officials challenged the accuracy of Mill's account of India. Alexander Walker believed that Mill's description of India was too gloomy, and his analysis incorrect in many details.¹ Likewise, Horace Wilson published his detailed commentaries on and corrections to Mill's *History* in his edition of the work in 1840. Walker's and Wilson's criticisms sought to point out the factual errors in Mill's work. But neither of them were able to challenge Mill's grand theory of historical progress and his views on the level of civilisation achieved by different nations, though they were both in doubt about Mill's standard of civilisation.² Mill's concerns with civil society were also distinct from those of the missionaries, which gained momentum from the 1830s. Charles Trevelyan (1807-1886) was an important person who stood behind Macaulay's and Bentinck's educational plans for the Anglicisation of India. He urged Bentinck to support the Anglicisation project, as the precondition for establishing a Christian civilisation. He wrote to Bentinck:

¹ Walker of Bowland NLS MSS 13737.

² Wilson commented 'the Hindu were not a civilized people according to Mill's standard; but what standard is, he has not fully defined. Civilization is used by him, however, as a relative term, and in this sense, we may readily grant that the Hindus never attained the advance made by modern Europe.' Mill, *History*, ii, 164n.

It is a glorious privilege, which I trust in God is reserved for your Lordship, to become the regenerator of more than 100 millions of your fellow creatures in all their successive generations, Nay, India is merely the stepping stone to the rest of Asia and providence is evidently concentrating her means of improvement here in order that, setting out from India as a base of operation, they may afterwards be applied with greater effect to the surrounding nations.³

It was Charles Grant's legacy of religious missions, rather than Mill's concerns with civil society that was to drive British educational policy after Mill's death in 1836. In addition, John Stuart Mill's conversion to individualism was to provide a new perspective on his father's reform. Being influenced by Samuel Taylor Coleridge's, Horace Wilson's and Herder's ideas of innate happiness derived from fine arts and nature, and cultural, national identity, John Mill had much more respect for Indian prejudices and sentiments than his father, who had complacently believed that the Indians did not actually care about sharing government power with the British.⁴ In his celebrated work, *On Liberty*, John Mill confidently reinforced his view of individualism. Very likely referring to his father and other Utilitarian reformers in the non-European world, John Stuart Mill criticised the English philanthropists on the grounds that they were too interested 'in making a people all alike', 'by the same maxims and rules'. He wrote that 'I am not aware that any community has a right to force another to be civilized.'⁵ In short, the process of civilisation was one that required self-development

³ Charles. E. Trevelyan to William Bentinck, 9 April 1834, *The Correspondence of Lord William Cavendish Bentinck*, ed. C. H. Philips (2 vols., Oxford, 1977), ii, 1239. Trevelyan earned himself the confidence of William Bentinck, the governor-general, and published 'On the Education of the People of India' in 1838. See *DNB*. For Macaulay's career of educational reform in India, see John Clive, *Thomas Babington Macaulay: the Shaping of the Historian* (London, 1973), chs. 7 and 8.

⁴ The most comprehensive study of John Stuart Mill's view of British imperial role in ruling India is found in Lynn Zastoupil, *John Stuart Mill and India* (Stanford, CA, 1994). For John Mill's sympathy with Coleridge's, Wilson's and Herder's ideas of cultural identity, see chs. 2, 4 and 5 of Zastoupil's work; particularly pp. 42, 129ff.

⁵ John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (Harmondsworth, 1974), pp. 138, 161.

and self-transformation, rather than having changes given or imposed by others. The last and, perhaps, the most important development in British discourses about Asia in the second half of nineteenth century was racial concerns about different cultures and societies. As James Mill supported civil reforms, he could not accept any theory of determinism. He rejected Montesquieu's physical determinism. On the other hand, the new imperialism of the late nineteenth century was very much influenced by racial theories.⁶ In the light of the Darwinian perspective on society and evolution, biological facts were thought to be a key mechanism in the making of civilisations. Fredric Farrar, a leading member of the Ethnological Society of London claimed that the different races 'have always been as distinct as they are now ... it is impossible for their limits to be confused either by degeneracy on the one hand or progress on the other.'⁷ The best example that signified the change of intellectual interests in explaining historical phenomena and the non-European world after Mill's death can be found in the work of John Crawfurd. Crawfurd, a MD at Edinburgh, a surgeon in India, an active campaigner for free-trade and a writer for the *Edinburgh Review*, then became a theorist of ethnology. He devoted his later life to founding the Ethnological Society of London and supporting the theory of polygeneity. Crawfurd argued that each race had its own genetic peculiarity, which was not just the result of climate.⁸ From a racial perspective,

⁶ Paul B. Rich, *Race and Empire in British Politics* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 12-3. See also Susan Bayly, 'Caste and "Race" in the Colonial Ethnography of India', *The Concepts of Race in South Asia*, ed. Peter Robb (Oxford, 1995), pp. 165-218. and Crispin Bates, 'Race, Caste, and Tribes in Central India: the Early Origins of Indian Anthropometry', *ibid.*, pp. 219-59.

⁷ Quoted from Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men* (Ithaca, NY, 1989), p. 296.

⁸ 'The example of the vigorous race of genuine European blood, bred in the hot plains of South America, under the very line, would seem satisfactorily to prove, that the long entertained notion that the European race undergoes, from the mere effect of climate, a physical degeneracy when transplanted to the native countries of the black or copper-coloured races, is no better than a prejudice. The different races of men appear to preserve their distinctions wholly independent of climate.' *History of Indian Archipelago*, iii,

Crawfurd proposed the 'mental inferiority of the Asiatics'.⁹ His view of morality contained still more suggestions of racial determinism.

In morals there has ever existed a wide differences between Europeans and Asiatics. Truth, the basis of all morality, has never distinguished the race of India. In Europe fidelity to engagements has been in esteem even in rude times, and increased with the advance of civilization. Not so in Asia, for it may safely be asserted that there the most civilized nations are found to be the least truthful, among whom may be named the Persians, the Hindus, and the Chinese ... It is only among Asiatic nations of the second order of civilization, such as the Burmese, Malays, &c., that we find an adherence to truth, and even they become demoralised in the attainment of power. The difference in morals between Europeans and Asiatics seems to have belonged to all ages. ¹⁰

The potential danger of Crawfurd's racial discourses was that they implied the unchangeability of human capacity, which in turn determined the social institutions and the civilisation of each 'race'. As Adas summarises, 'For Crawfurd, a tendency toward despotism, like indifference or hostility to innovation, was inherent in the racial composition of the Asiatic peoples.'¹¹ Although James Mill's description of Indian backwardness would be used to justify the theory of biological determinism, Mill was, indeed, a genuinely staunch opponent of any sort of determinism. Whereas Mill was concerned with the progress or general improvement of society, the adherents of 'scientific racism' tried to rationalise why some races could not make progress and why some others suffered from degeneration. It seems that the second half of nineteenth century was far away from the main trends of Scottish enlightenment thought, which was concerned with how moral philosophy could help to create a good government for different societies. In spite of his puritan rigidity, Mill's intellectual concerns belonged

272-3.

⁹ Quoted from Dadabhai Naoroji, *The European and Asiatic Races: Observation on the Paper read by John Crawfurd, F. R. S. before the Ethnological Society, on February 14th, 1866* (London, 1866), p. 3.

¹⁰ From Dadabhai Naoroji, *ibid.*, pp. 9-10n.

¹¹ Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men*, p. 302.

to the eighteenth century and the Scottish Enlightenment, rather than to the nineteenth century and the Victorian age.

Mill's *History of British India* was a complicated and eclectic intellectual performance derived from Scottish moral philosophy and as a theory of history. It was also an imperialist manifesto of the early nineteenth century. It set the eighteenth century's concerns of liberty and social order within an imperial agenda of civilising 'the others' in the early nineteenth century. It was a confident and even extravagant assertion of human rationality, a belief in progress. On the other hand, it was also an expression of the view that no society should be doomed to be backward or retrograde, as the physiological determinism or theories of degeneration of late nineteenth century professed. Mill's enlightenment imperialism was individual to him, and, as such, probably short-lived.

APPENDIX
CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN JAMES MILL AND ALEXANDER WALKER

No. 1 (James Mill to Alex. Walker)

NLS MSS 13724 ff. 132-3v. Walker of Bowland

East India House 5th Oct. 1819

My dear Sir,

I have two things for which I am bound most gratefully to thank you - the first is, the continuance of your good opinion, which, how much soever it is above my deserts (& I will not tell how much I know it to be so) Yet I am well assured is sincere, & therefore highly delightful - the second is, the trouble you are taking (of which you have lent me so excellent an earnest) to make me acquainted with these facts or opinions in my book which to you appear to be more or less incorrect.

I shall not in general trouble you with any particular reply to your criticism, least of all where they fully convince me, which would be only to draw upon your attention without any use. Where I may wish for additional explanations, however, I shall not scruple to renew my calls, or where that which I intended is not the precise aspect of the subject which may have presented itself to you. In this latter predicament I fear is placed ^{part} of what I have said in my preface on the comparison of the India - bred, & European bred historian, on the subject of India - for I see hardly any thing in your strictures on this point with which I do not fully agree. It would have been very absurd in me not fully to admit, that great advantages were given by being in India. And my sole object was to prevent those advantages from being valued so high, that a history of India, from a man who had not been in India, might not be looked upon a priori as a thing only to be contemned. This chance was not very small, judging by the remarks which I was accustomed to hear. But it is not impossible that I may have urged the evidence on the other side a little too far & have given real cause to imagine that I valued the advantage of local knowledge, & the means of improvement in India much less than I do. And to this I shall be careful to attend in my new edition.

I am exceedingly interested in all your remarks upon my inquiry into the state of civilization among the Hindus, and particularly flattered by your approbation. My object

in this inquiry has been frequently misunderstood by Indian gentlemen, whose sympathies are engaged in the side of the Hindus, & who have accused me of being prejudiced against them. Now assuredly I am not prejudiced against them, for never was there a human being more anxious to do them good, but I am convinced that a true estimate of the state of their civilization, & of the stage which they have reached in the progress from simplicity & rudeness to refinement is an essential condition to the adoption of the manners which are best calculated to do them good; and I can at any rate say that I carefully & honestly weighed the evidence which appeared to me to determine their rank in the scale of civilization, & that I made an extensive search for every article of evidence which bore upon the question.

Mr McCulloch, who I am happy to tell you is in perfect health, was very sensible to the terms of admiration in which you mentioned him in your letter to me, which I would not deny myself the pleasure of communicating to him, though your extravagant praise of me made me blush when I did so, but my desire that he should see what was thought of me by a man whom he so highly esteems, overcame, what was perhaps not very difficult to overcome, all the modesty I had.

I believe I must request you to take, in addition to all your other trouble, that of sending your communications (partly at least) under some privileged covers; for though I our letters are paid for here, it is a privilege I wish to use sparingly. You may address to me under cover to David Ricardo Esq. M. P. Michinhampton Glostershire; or to Joseph Hume Esq. M. P. London, who is at some watering place, if you find any inconvenience in getting covers nearer; the only thing I regret in receiving them through the gentlemen I have mentioned, is that I shall get them some days later.

Believe with the truest regard most/faithfully Yours

J. Mill

No. 2 (James Mill to Alex. Walker)

NLS MSS 13724 ff. 177-8v

East India House 6th November 1819

My dear Sir,

Nothing can be more to my heart's desire than the mode in which you pen for me your remarks. I see that they are the immediate unvarnished transcript of your mind, the

exact copy of your feelings & opinions at the moment; which are a far more valuable source of evidence to me than the most laboured discussions which your genius could produce; As the judge gathers more from the unpremeditated tones, looks & gestures of the witness, than he does from his words. The immediate results of the recollection of gentlemen from India of men of feeling & of understanding combined, are the materials by which I can best supply the disadvantage of not having been there, & by which I become as near as possible a percipient witness of the people whom I wish so truly to understand.

I wrote thus far, the very morning I received your letter, & have not been able to resume it. I have however missed the usual regularity of your communications. I received what you transmitted through Mr Ricardo to the date of 21st October, & since that time I have received no more. I hope, at any rate, you have not been delaying in your writing, whatever you may do in your transmitting. There will be so many parliamentary men in London presently that we shall not be at any loss; & I shall not be under the necessity of loading you with expense in addition to trouble.

I must however scold you a little for allowing yourself to suppose I could take offence at any thing you have said, unless I were to take offence at you for saying a great deal more good of me than I deserve. I am quite sure that you have never said one word which you do not truly believe, and which you did not think of importance to the cause of truth & of your fellow men.

I fully agree with you that we have no standard of civilization, & of course no precise & accurate ideas, or language in which to convey them. Amid the difficulties with which I had to struggle, & which nobody seems to have appreciated more greatly than yourself, I inferred, that the only thing I could do was to institute comparisons, as extensive as possible, embracing all the circumstances which constitute the grand feature of human society, & by observing the nations with whom the Hindus had the greatest number of circumstances in common, & appealing to the common opinions of mankind with respect to these nations, ascertain whereabouts among the other inhabitants of the globe they might in respect to valuable arguments be supposed to be placed. As I had persuaded myself however that the ideas of Sir William Jones, Dr Robertson & others, who led the public on this subject before my time, were too high with respect to the comparative progress of the Hindus, & had led the British rulers of India into injustices to the Hindus, as being ill fitted to their stage of society, - it is not impossible that I may have leant too strongly to the other side, though I shall think that you & I do not really

differ much, if we had only a precise language, by which we could communicate our real ideas to one another. I draw this conclusion, because there are so few of your observations in detail to which I do not assent, though they are adduced by you to show that my estimate of the civilization of the people in question is too low. I draw the same conclusion from what occurs to me with Mr Strachey, who like you accuses me of rating the Hindus below the proper mark. And yet the other day, when I asked him, do you not allow that our British ancestors were in a state as far advanced in point of civilization in the days of Henry the 4th as the Hindus were when the Moguls conquered them? He answered instantly that he thought our ancestors were then more advanced. I answered, you then go as far as I do. The whole of that long and minute induction which I laboriously performed in my 1st book appears to me to lead merely to that conclusion.

I have written all this in such a hurry, that I question whether either my penmanship or my diction is intelligible. You pleased me exceedingly by telling me that you write (as I used to do) in the midst of your children. God bless you all together; I long to see you. I have half a dozen, & have hitherto been sole preceptor myself - I think you would say not unsuccessfully. J. Mill

No. 3 (Alex. Walker to James Mill)
NLS MSS 13724 ff. 189-92

Bowland 21st November 1819

My dear Sir

I was in Edin. when your letter of the 6th arrived and had not the the [the original mistake of the manuscript] pleasure of receiving it untill my return home a few days ago - This circumstance had prevented me answering it sooner. I have in this interval read but little. The last sheets that I sent you were endorsed to Mr Ricardo, and if you have received those that were previously franked by Sir Jas. Montgomery, all that I have written will have come into your possession. Altho' I am sensible that these desultory remarks can add very little to your information, I shall nevertheless continue them and only request of you in return to let me have them back at a future period. I should wish to retrace these hasty opinions with the advantage of your remarks and to study more at leisure a subject which has always some interest for me. I shall in the mean time be happy if any thing I say should meet your wishes and judgement.

One of my strongest desires is still to be useful to the people of India and to

enflame into the minds of my countrymen sentiments towards them of kindness and justice. It is in your power to correct a multitude of errors and remove many prejudices. There is a great field before you and you have given the world an admirable specimen of very powerful and comprehensive talents; but you have taken a dark and a severe view of the Hindu character which does not agree either with my experience or observation. If I conceal this opinion I should be unworthy of your esteem and confidence. At the same time, I begin to think that there is little chance of introducing any great change in your sentiments. They are very determined and have been formed after great reflection and a most laborious research. They are too fixed to be easily moved and they are asserted with more power, as you have not I am thoroughly convinced adopted them, but under the most sincere impression of their truth. For the sake of the Hindus and their amelioration this is unfortunate. It will add to the state of disgrace and reproach under which they [the Hindus] already labour with many people; and the authority of your name will be produced to sink them still lower in the scale of society. The continual association of immorality and vice with their character will only expose them to the further contumely and contempt of our countrymen who are appointed to rule over them. I know that this is the very reverse of your intention, but such is the tendency of our nature and such is the spirit that I have often had occasion to check in its exercise. This country should never perhaps attempt to legislate for India. There will always be a greater chance of doing mischief than good. We are too much separated by nature and situation, and still more by manners, to be accurate judges of what is best for their interest and happiness. The greatest favour that Great Britain can confer upon India, is to see that the laws of the country are fairly administered. They are quite sufficient for the security of life and property, which are the main ends of Justice. An established and constant mode of process which the Natives understand is preferable to any changes, which a fortuitous Gov^t like ours can never hope to ripen into maturity.

I cannot but think that you still estimate the Hindu civilization a great deal too low. You seem to consider the Mahomedans as having improved and refined their manners; but this does not appear to me to have been the case. The rude and illiterate nations of Tartary had little improvement in the Arts of regular life to import. The fact is they were looked upon by the Hindus as fierce barbarians who were indebted to the people they conquered for their refinement in taste and elegance. This is always acknowledged by the Mahomedan writers, who frequently own the superiority of the Hindu in science and in most other accomplishments.

The vague ideas we have of civilization must render every attempt peculiarly difficult, if not abortive, to fix the precise rank of the Hindus in the scale. In my opinion they are far above the days of Henry the 4th. They lived in a faithless period, which was distinguished by crimes and Civil wars. Property was extremely insecure and the Laws but little respected. If the state of civilization depends on commerce it had made little progress in that reign, when bills of exchange were unknown and a communication had scarcely begun to be established between the Southern and the Northern parts of Europe. It was extremely rare even in the 15th Century for an English vessel to appear in the Mediterranean. In the 14th Century we are informed that the manners even of the Italians were rude. The cloaths of the men were of leather unlined and badly tanned. We are told by a Spaniard who came to London with Philip the 2^d that the English lived in houses made of sticks and dirt but they fared commonly as well as the King. Even the Art of building with bricks was unknown in England untill it came into general use in the time of Henry the 6th. The people were ill lodged and not well cloathed untill the beginning of last Century. In Scotland every thing was worse. In short the Pride of Europe was quite barbarick untill a very recent period and we must come down very low indeed before we can institute any comparison with Hindu manners. I am ready to admit that the state of society in India is very unequal, but it every where affords traces of having been in a superior condition and in some situations it is equal to what we can generally at present produce in Europe. I have some times compared the manners of our Europeans and Sepoys when encamped together. This I should think was a situation for a pretty fair contrast and in all the essential qualities of temperance, decency, and morals, the comparative estimate was in favour of the Sepoys. This is an extensive subject and I have not room to pursue it farther; nor can I expect to say anything which is not already familiar to you.

I remember I was forcibly struck one day that I called at your office when you told me that you had been the preceptor to your children. This was a most interesting picture and I was tempted at the moment to have asked you many questions. You say that you have six; what age have they attained, what methods did you employ and what knowledge did you first impart to their little minds? It is a natural and a delightful duty to superintend their progress. In the discipline of some of the ancient schools I believe that none but the parent had the power of corporal punishment and the degrading application of the rod was of course but seldom inflicted. With my own boys I have found admonition sufficient and the natural influence of reason is the only correction

perhaps that should be employed. I propose to carry them to a school in England where I think the character of the mind is better formed than with us, but this is a subject on which I must think often. I remain my dear Sir,

Most fait[full]y and sincerely yours
signed A. Walker

No. 4 (James Mill to Alex. Walker)

NLS MSS 13725 ff. 12-3

East India House 26 Feb 1820

<< ... >>

We have been printing since before Xtmass - but I have not gone on with the first volume beyond the place up to which I had the benefit of your remarks. This, however, has been no inconvenience; because I have been going on with the other volumes. I have not now time to make nearly all the alterations which I would have wished to make, & shall make, if the work comes to a third edition. But I have been enabled to correct some errors, of which you have convinced me, & still more frequently to guard my readers against certain extensions of my conclusions which I did not mean - but to which you have shown me that they were liable. Above all you have convinced me that I have drawn the moral character of the Hindus in too dark colours, & this I shall acknowledge.

You will be happy to hear that we go on harmoniously, & I believe successfully, in every sense that you could wish, with the Indian correspondence I have answered all the arrears of letters in Bengal, I have made considerable progress with those of Madras. I shall soon be at your territory, on the western coast, & shall be extremely happy to receive information from you, if you think there is any point of importance to which I may be in danger of not looking in the proper light. Pray have you formed any opinion what they call at Madras Meerassy* rights? I have had a number of conversations with Mr Ravenshaw - our director upon the subject; & he has just put into my hands a paper on the subject, which he has drawn up a good deal, I believe, at my suggestion.

* Meerass, *mirás* or *miráth*, means heritage or patrimony.

Bowland 8th April 1820

My dear Sir

I have had the pleasure to receive your letter of the 20th of last month. I am quite aware of the pressure and importance of public business which requires your attention. I thank you however very sincerely for your kind sentiments. There is no person whose opinion I respect and value more. A letter from you when you have leisure will always be a high treat and gratification to me. I shall make you in future pay for all my bulky and indigested effusions, nor is this a vain threat as you may experience to your cost.

I have read your History with attention. Of the narrative part I shall say nothing at present farther than to remark that I cannot easily find terms to express my sense of your rigorous and undeviating pursuit of Truth. You are invariably faithful, firm and daring in the exposures of injustice and oppression. This is one of the best, altho' one of the rarest qualities of an Historian, especially of one who writes an account of the transactions of his own time. Paul was in the same situation, and he has not exceeded you in his virtuous detestation of tyranny and bad men. You have thrown a new light on the government of India, and an interest is now kindled in this country which has removed that destructive effects of ignorance and indifference.

I agree with your political instructions and consequences almost in every instance; and particularly with the judgement you have passed on the measures from first to last of the company's Government and our subsidiary Treaties. I have the vanity to say that I have more than once thought and written in favour of the same doctrine.

The History of Warren Hastings's administration is peculiarly instructive. The effect is quite dramatic. It has destroyed the respect I had of his political character and much of the regard that I had for him as a man. He appears to have possessed in an eminent degree those meritorious qualities which have spread over his name an unmerited luster. With talents unquestionably of the first order he was always ready to employ them for wicked, mischievous and disingenuous purposes. It is impossible to believe that he had not in view to appropriate to his own use, those large sums of money which he ultimately carried to the account of the Company, and which he acquired by fraud and swindling. I had forgiven many of his questionable deeds by attributing them to that political necessity, which is so often improperly urged to excuse vices and crimes; but Warren Hastings seems never to have gone out of the way to avoid this pollution, on

the contrary to have met it at all times with open arms. It is impossible to pardon his tergiversations, or to palliate the unmeasurable extent to which he carried his revenge and the gratification of some of the worst passions of our nature. I almost think you have damned him with too much mercy.

I shall read again the Historical part of the History and perhaps at some future period communicate to you a few remarks, or which would be much more agreeable talk the subject over when we may meet.

You will, I fear have thought me a very importunate and perhaps a prejudiced advocate for the people of India. If by prejudiced is meant a prepossession in favour of the people and a desire that they should not be judged by partial evidence, I have not much objection to the term. The evidence on which they have been judged is also I might say the effect of prejudice; but more inveterate and dangerous as it is attended by actual and immediate injury. The truth is that few men are without partiality and prejudice. The power of the judgement itself exercised with uncertainty and its [sic] is continually discovered by the change of our opinions. I would not write a panegyric on the people of India nor on any other. All I wish to contend for is that they are like any of the great body of mankind and contain in their character a mixture of good and bad qualities. This is the case with all the masses of human beings and is not otherwise in India. The only way of forming an accurate judgement of men is by observing their usual mode of life. It has so happened that the native Army that portion of Indian population which has fallen more narrowly and closely under our observation than any other. Every one are has agreed in allowing to the Sepoys not only courage but a large share of moral virtues. They are sober, frugal, modest and obedient; faithful to the service under which they have engaged themselves and attached to their officers. It is not pretended that their qualities are acquired from us, who take no pains to instruct them in any thing except their mere military exercises; besides they possess the same qualities in the service of the native Princes. Our European soldiers are too profligate to afford them any thing but lessons. The privilege of an exclusive Military tribe has been long lost in India and the present race of soldiers are drawn indiscriminately from the people at large. How can we doubt but that this population of which these Sepoys are a part not even selected, but enlisted as in England, should possess the same qualities and good dispositions? But we come in contact with the rest of the population of India on very different terms. We only confide to them servile and mean Offices. We neglect and despise their society. The great body of people are kept under the constant fear of change and insult. Our courts of justice are

surrounded by barriers and forms and expenses that render them nearly inaccessible. Our revenue Officers are continually in pursuit of new sources of revenue. It is the poor and labouring classes in India by whom the direct Taxes are almost entirely paid. This forms a singular and extraordinary feature, as I apprehend, in the circumstances of that People. The diversity of manner and language, everything in short lends to separate them from us. When they see every effort made to draw from them as many advantages as possible and to establish our superiority by every means it is [tr. 'is it'] not to be expected that they will endeavour to close or entangle all the sources of knowledge and of information? This most natural effort to protect themselves has often been attributed to the arts of treachery, and to covetous disposition, and in short the shifts by which it was supported ascribed to an unusual share of cunning and duplicity. In the moment of disappointment and irritation a report is made, and every thing is laid to the guile and fraudulent character of the natives. I avoid particular and individual examples but they can be given. My intention is to show the manner and means by which we have formed, in many cases, our judgement of the people of India; and how we have hastened from some temporary circumstances, affecting at the same time only one part of the society, to make out permanent and general conclusions.

I have great pleasure in quoting the authority of Van Rhude in favour of the natives of India who devoted more of his time and took better opportunities of becoming acquainted with the genius and pursuits of the people, than any other Governor, or perhaps than any other European whatever. As the *Hortus Malabaricus* is scarce and not one to be met with easily in London I shall transcribe a passage from it, but the whole of that splendid work is a testimony of the industry of Van Rhude and of the excellent qualities of the natives. It is thus that he describes his intercourse with them and their zeal and alacrity to meet his wishes. This extract is longer than I intended but I was unwilling to abridge it and many more remarks are to be formed in the *Hortus* which I think curious. He speaks of the distinction of Caste, their stoical strictness, their rigid and inviolable obligations. This good consequence he says is effected. They prevent a deficiency in any of the Arts. Parents may hand down to their children as if from one hand to another, whatever instructions are necessary for the perfection of that art and all spend a tranquil and easy life. He mentions the unshaken constancy of their manners and customs for so many ages. With them, he says, those principles were always accounted the most valuable, which tended to render the republic more lasting; and free from all change. I quote in his own words the following sentence which so nearly agrees with the

sentiment delivered on the same subject by Sir Wm. Jones. "Their Theology and Policy too so artfully and prudently coincide, so wisely also are they discriminated, and they support the reputation of each other in such a manner, that to which the preference might be given, may be a matter of some doubt." He says the Bramans live in the greatest retirement and harmony and may be considered the happiest men in the world. The nobles are numerous and on the whole he concludes "that a change of life and manners is a circumstance neither to be wished for nor expected." Speaking of their Gov^l. of which Van Rhude was a competent judge, he calls it a republic talks of a free people blessed with such privileges, that it may seem to be a Democracy, it is sufficiently strong to preserve peace and to suppress sedition, "at least so as to prevent them from producing any material change of Affairs." Van Rhude pays the following tribute to the people of India which certainly places them high above all Indi-Chinese nations. "They do not intermarry with other nations, and yet they most willingly suffer people of all nations, and all religions to live among them. They never overpass their paternal boundaries, nor do they suffer the aggressions of strangers to be repeated with impunity."

I have insensibly made these extracts which appear to me interesting; but you must know the book. As Van Rhude wrote more than 130 years ago, long before any of the topics of Indian controversy were thought of, and was a man of great judgement and candour much weight is due to his authority. This acquaintance was chiefly if not entirely, with Malabar, where foreign manners had made no impression nor had the Mahomedan Arms as yet penetrated into that Country. Altho' I have already tired you with these long and desultory opinions, I am still going to add to them.

The Hindus are accused of inhumanity to their fellow creatures while they show on affected care for animal life. I believe I neglected to state their kind and benevolent treatment of [-] as an argument against the former part of this proposition. Were it not indeed for the name of slavery it is stripped there of all its horror. The slave is considered as a child of the family. He calls his master Father. They are seldom punished or severely tasked. They are addressed with the same kind and endearing epithet. It is wonderful how much influence a beneficent mode of speaking will have in reconciling the inequalities and soothing the miseries of human life. Now one of the best proofs of a good disposition is the tender treatment of those who are in power and at our mercy. There is a general obligation of humanity also towards animals. The Hindus are not the only people who have built houses for their reception after they became infirm or useless. The Turks have hospitals for Beasts. The Romans had them for Geese. The

Athenians gave freedom to the Mules who had been serviceable in building a Temple. The Egyptians were mourning at the death of certain animals and Cimon gave an honourable burial to the mares with which he had won three prizes.

The instance which Doc^r Buchanan gives of the inhospitality of the Hindus when I bestow upon it a second thought, appears absolutely ridiculous. He complains that he could not but by force obtain a cot for a Sepoy who was sick though he was assured there was one in every house: & every family had a bed to sleep on; and the Doctor thinks it most barbarous that these Inhabitants did not deprive their wives and children of this convenience and oblige them to lie on the cold ground in order to accommodate the wants of the Sepoy. Besides there was something in the purpose of the demand absurd. Instead of requiring a Cot for a litter, the first and natural expedient would have been to have taken the Sepoys lamb or cloak and converted it into a carriage or Hammock bed by hanging it from a Bamboo. This the Sepoy could have told him, if he had any experience, and was such a litter as he must often have seen. But bring the case home among ourselves and to this hospitable Country of our own. Would any person think it a reasonable proposition if he was asked to surrender his bed to a struggling soldier who should require it to be conveyed comfortably in to his quarters, to obtain this I believe it would require the Doctor's argument, the ultimo ratio-farce. The Inhabitants might just as well have expected the Doctor to have lent the Sepoy his own Cot or his Palanquin; but how many other expedients ought he to have tried before he thought of taking their beds from the Inhabitants.

The charge of covetousness is another favourite theme against the Hindus; but by whom are they charged with this vice? By Europeans the most covetous race of men; by those who visit India for gain, who strip the natives of their wealth and then accuse them of avarice because they withhold the remainder. In all the arts of amassing money we equal or excell the Hindus. This subject would require a dissertation.

Litigiousness is another accusation against the Hindus arising much out of European injustice. I think you have ably elucidated this subject, altho' you have allowed the accusation to remain. Those can only be called litigious who have an inclination to vexatious suits. A person does not deserve the term who enters into a juridical contest for the protection of his property, or the security of his rights. In this he is guided by a love of justice and a respect for the first principles of society. We have the testimony of Sir H. Strachey, that in 95 suits out of 100 the parties who institute them have just grounds of complaint. You have traced the origin of their accusation to its genuine

source: The inadequate and defective means which we have established in India for the administration of Justice. This subject would afford room for many severe observations. We refuse an establishment for the assertion of the most natural rights of society.

I have a good deal of difficulty to make up my mind with respect to the wealth of India. Like every thing in the shape of riches and happiness or any other great good, it has been exaggerated. In all ages however the riches of India have been proverbial. This term is easily understood when it is applied to the natural abundance and fertility of the soil; but it is not so obvious when it is made to embrace the precious metals. India has no mines to any extent either of Gold or Silver. It is indebted for all that it possesses to the returns of commerce and there is a distant influence in exchange for the manufactures and natural productions of the Country. These cause a regular and uninterrupted accumulation. There must be some means of bringing back into circulation this superabundant wealth. Unhappily as yet conquest and violence have been the only expedients for this purpose. This did not begin with the expedition of Alexander and it has been continued down to our time by a regular series. It has been computed that Nader Shah carried out of India 30 million Sterling. This was besides all that was consumed, destroyed and plundered; but the spoils which we have brought from India probably exceed a hundred fold all that our predecessors have taken by fits and starts. It would be a curious calculation to ascertain the amount of the wealth which has been brought by the Company and Individuals from India. This would include property of every description; but from the amount must be deducted the species and the value of the cargoes which have been sent from this Country. The drains which we have made from India have been less violent than the exactions of other conquerors, but they have perhaps in their operation proved more destructive and deadly to the people. We have emptied gradually, but the pitcher has gone constantly to the well.

Altho' the riches of India may have been exaggerated I still think they have been great. The low state of the finances of the Princes is not a sufficient proof to the contrary. These are all taken from times of distress and desolation. But this is not a safe guide at any rate as many causes may exhaust the treasure of Kings and yet preserve the wealth of their subjects. There are individuals in India of immense wealth. I know a single shroff* who entered into a contract to supply cash for the payment and expenses of our army and to furnish coins of the currency of the country into whatever part of the chances of war

* Shrof, *sarráf*, means a banker or money changer.

might lead it. This he performed monthly and punctually. All the revenue of India is collected in gold and silver. It is often sent out of the Province in which it is collected and I have wondered how it got back again as some times, the means were not visible. Tippoo and the old King of Prussia are the only Princes in our days who have laid up stocks of treasure. The revenues of both were at the same time small, they had large armies to maintain and expensive wars to defray. It was not because Tippoo was unable, that his supplies were unpaid for but because he was unwilling. Perhaps he did not want them or it was a proof of his avarice and folly. - I expect you to laugh at some of these speculations; but I write to you in a spirit of idle communication [.] I must now say a few words on a far more important subject. My most serious and anxious thoughts are to give my Boys a good Education or rather to make them clever men. Their intellectual powers are capable. I think of receiving instruction and the crime must be mine if their faculties should remain uncultivated. I am unwilling to pursue a private system beyond this year and I would prefer an English school as I think there is a more manly way of thinking in that country than in Scotland. In the mean while I am certain they have thus far been better instructed than if they have been at a public school. The school that I have as yet thought of is that of Houghton le Spring. It has a good reputation; but that may be obtained with little merit. I have paid it a visit and found the Master a man of rigorous and acute mind. Still I found it difficult to make a choice and more so to lay down a system which may be pursued untill the object is completed. The term of Modern Education now lasts almost twenty years; a fearful period. Milton seems to disapprove of spending seven or eight years in merely scraping together so much Latin and Greek, as might he says, be learnt easily and delightfully in one year. It is this he observes which has generally made learning so unpleasing and so unsuccessful. Admitting this all to be true I do not see how the mischief is to be remedied. One is afraid of experiment. I would wish to profit by your experience and would beg you to give me your fullest advice. It is only elementary things that we are concerned with at present; but I should esteem it a great favour to hear from you what ought to be a course of study and reading untill the mind is formed or qualified to direct its self.

What in short should be done first and what last? The easiest arts ought to be taught first but explain to me what kind of knowledge which should be so acquired and the manner of attaining it. Ever faith[full]y yours.

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